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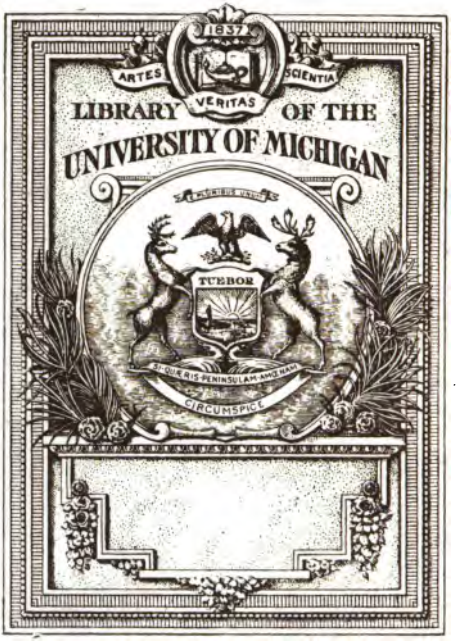
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What is Good English?

And Other Essays

What is Good English?

And Other Essays

By

Harry Thurston Peck

New York
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1899

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TO

My Friend and Colleague

BRANDER MATTHEWS

AS EVIDENCE OF

THE DISCORD OF OUR OPINIONS AND THE HARMONY OF OUR TASTES

recd. 06-2-28 LWB

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WHAT IS GOOD ENGLISH?

What is Good English?

THEY have a saying in London to the effect that if you see a person in the Row between the hours of twelve and one o'clock on Sunday, wearing a shooting-jacket and a particularly shabby hat, it is safe to assume that the person in question is a Duke, as one of lesser rank would never venture to appear there in a costume so utterly *négligé*. This little dictum has an application of its own in matters relating to our English speech and usage. The speaker and writer who is always spick and span in his verbal dress, who clothes his ideas only in the language of books, and who pronounces his words absolutely in accordance with the orthoëpy enjoined in dictionaries, may perhaps be an "educated" man; but his education is, in all probability, a very superficial one, for he is not sufficiently educated to be on easy terms with his education. He feels *endimanché*, like Joe Gargery in his holiday clothes. On

the other hand, the style that draws freely upon all the sources of our mother tongue, that is seasoned and vivified with good racy idioms, that at times and in the proper places allows itself a colouring of colloquialism, and that is not afraid of even a strong and striking bit of slang when it will serve a special purpose — this is the style not merely of an educated man, but of a master and moulder of language, the style of the linguistic artist, the style of the accomplished scholar.

Professor Hill, of Harvard University, not long ago, in writing down some thoughts about the underlying principles of usage, gave utterance to this very useful admonition: "Above all things, avoid the use of schoolmasters' English." What he meant was: "Do not be pedantic, do not limit yourself to a narrowly restricted vocabulary, do not think that formal grammar and the arbitrary work of the lexicographer have drawn a line in language over which you must never pass." Yet the teaching of English in American schools is too often circumscribed in just that way. It is a national superstition with us that "the dictionary" came down direct from heaven, and that it contains everything

necessary to our linguistic salvation, when supplemented by the cut-and-dried pronouncements of a grave grammarian. Hence, when any question of the propriety of a word is broached, everyone goes trotting to the dictionary; and after its pages have been reverently consulted, *causa finita est.* So, too, when a question of syntax arises, the grammar is raked over to see if some formal rule applies; and if it does not, or if the suspected sentence cannot be "diagrammed," then the sentence is anathema. Now it is well enough to refer to the dictionary and to consult the grammar. A good dictionary and a good grammar are useful works; but it is the very first mark of inefficiency in a teacher of English if he leads his pupils to look upon either of these as though it had descended amid the crash of thunder and the blaze of fire that accompanied the decalogue on Sinai.

If, indeed, the word-mongers and the diagrammers could ever have their way unchecked, our literary English would be just as fixed and lacking in mobility as Sanskrit or Egyptian; for it would be as dead as they, and as incapable of enrichment and expan-

sion. But fortunately, there are limits to the repressive authority of the schoolmen. Side by side with that portion of our language which has received their gracious sanction, runs the rich stream of spoken English, continually renewed from a thousand verbal rivulets. The pedants will not recognise its existence, and those timid writers who are bound by formal precept and tradition dare not dip into it for fear of being called "inelegant;" but every little while, some independent, vigorous-minded genius, who sees with his own eyes and who has a sense of what the literary language lacks, will fearlessly resort to the swelling stream of colloquial English, and he will take from it what pleases him, and by the force of his example will lead others on to follow him. Hence the English of our literature is being always reinforced against the will of its self-appointed guardians; and when each new edition of a dictionary appears, the compilers will be found to have been forced to recognise as good and classical what all their predecessors stigmatised as incorrect and censurable. Who does not remember that when Johnson made his dictionary, "pony" was

set down as slang, and the exquisitely beautiful word "gloaming" as a vulgarism? And I am acquainted with a profoundly learned and accomplished scholar who declares that he would rather starve than use the word "starvation," because it is a mongrel form, — an Anglo-Saxon base and a Latin termination. Yet what other word in English expresses the same meaning? The popular acceptance of the "mongrel" long ago justified Dundas in its introduction. It was needed, and so it has survived.

The same thing has been true in the history of many languages. Take Latin, for example. In the third century before Christ, the Roman speech was bare indeed. The process which was finally to develop it into a great instrument of melody and power had only just begun; so that its vocabulary was meagre and its forms of expression bald and commonplace. Then came Plautus, a marvellous master of language, with a genius like that of Shakespeare, a luxuriant fancy, and a bold, creative mind. He threw at once into the literary crucible a thousand vivid, picturesque, and glowing terms culled from the language of the streets and shops, and on their

analogy he himself made hundreds of other curiously expressive words, while his daring spirit flung into his literary work a richness of expression, a variety of diction, and a felicitous fertility of phrase such as still remains a model of what can be done in any language by one who feels enough at home to take with it inspired liberties. Plautus, however, was a man of humble origin; the drama was held in no high repute; and so his splendid vocabulary remained largely untouched and unrecognised by the stiff-backed purists of Rome, until there arose another great master of style in the person of Cicero, whose influence was so dominant as to make his usage the law of Latin literature, and who, perceiving the perfection of the Plautine speech, made much of it his own, and gave to it the stamp of his supreme authority, and thus converted into classic diction what had hitherto been kept without the pale of authorised Latinity.

Now the English language, as a whole, is the richest of all modern tongues, and it is not to be bounded by the comparatively narrow limits of its literature. There exists, as well, the easy, fluent usage of conversation, and there is also the strong, simple, homely

speech of the common people, rooted in plain Saxon, smacking of the soil, and having a sturdy power about it that is unsurpassable for downright force and blunt directness. So, when a writer comes to the task of dealing with a large and varied theme, must he be satisfied to cramp his language by keeping always to the prim elegance, the neat hedge-rows, of scholastic diction? Shall he not avail himself of all the wonderful resources of the entire language, drawing from all its treasures, and selecting, with no pedantic sniffs or questions as to origin, whatever will best suit his own immediate purpose? If he be independent enough to defy convention, he surely will do this. Like a musician seated at a mighty organ, like a painter beside his palette, he will choose, with unerring taste, whatever note, whatever tint he most may need. His one aim will be to make his meaning absolutely certain, to drive it home to the mind of the reader with all the fire and force of which he is a master, — to inform, to please, to persuade, and to convince. Therefore he takes the very word he wants, whether it be a learned compound, or whether it be a product of the music-hall; only, what-

ever he takes, it must be the word or the phrase that will give the precise shade of meaning which he is endeavouring to convey, having just the right colour, and just the point and power that will make it linger in the memory. And so the writer of the best English is he whose language responds exactly to his mood and thought, now thundering and surging with the majestic words whose immediate ancestry is Roman, now rippling and singing with the smooth harmonies of later speech, now forging ahead with the irresistible energy of the Saxon, and now laughing and wantoning in the easy lightness of our modern phrase.

This instinct, this discretion, this insight, this feeling for the exact word and the exact expression, can never come from merely taking thought. It cannot be acquired in the schools nor from the text-books. Even the widest reading and the closest observation will not create it. A purely formal style, one of correctness and precision, one that is true to the ordinary literary models, may be acquired; but that is all. The style of the born writer who flings himself joyously into his subject, who revels in the wealth and fer-

tility of his own linguistic resources, and who creates a literary manner for himself, is as truly a gift of Nature as is the poet's inspiration or the sculptor's sense of form; for it is largely a matter of temperament. It cannot be man-given, though it may be disciplined and wonderfully enriched by culture; and what is of even more importance is the fact that it can be cramped and dwarfed and stunted. While it is still in the early stages of its evolution it can be made self-conscious by cheap criticism, and the mind that is back of it may be brought to feel ashamed of its own originality by those persons whose source of inspiration is discoverable in a text-book. While it is still sensitive to authority, dull minds that move by rule and formula may clip its wings and make its spontaneity seem lawless, its unconventionality barbaric. And if one has been taught from the beginning to feel an unreasoning reverence for mere printed precepts, then the process of discouragement is made still easier, so that, in many cases, rare originality is caged, and cramped into a literary formalism.

Remembering all these things, what ought to be the attitude of a practical teacher of English,

who knows that among the minds for whose development and training he is to become responsible, there may, perhaps, be one or two possessed of a capacity for high achievement? He must necessarily impart a knowledge of the ordinary canons of language and of style. He must, in much of what he does, rely upon such text-books as exist. He must accept and teach the usual standards, the technical traditions, the rules and principles that have come down to us from the days of Priscian and Quintilian. All this he must inevitably do. But if he be a teacher worthy of the name, and one who is imbued with the spirit of the language and its genius, he will not stop here. He will teach these things; but his point of view will never be the point of view of one who sees no further than the printed page. He will impart a knowledge of the formal rules, but in doing so he will never fail to show how every formal rule is only a convenience; how it embodies only a portion of the truth and not the whole of it; how it stands for a norm, a convenient every-day expression of usual fact, and not for an ultimate and invariable standard to which all usage must of necessity be conformed. He

will rehearse the conventional laws of style, but he will make it clear by numerous and striking examples how these laws are often gloriously violated, and how they are never to be viewed as fettering the freer play of genius. He will, above all, show that usage makes a rule rather than a rule the usage, and that while one may be safe inside the rule, he may be splendid beyond it. In this way the teacher will offer a perfectly consistent training to the mind that is commonplace, without at the same time discouraging the exceptional mind that has within itself a capacity for what is striking and unusual. Yet he will not glorify the unconventional for its own sake, since he will show that there is an unconventionality which is slovenly and vulgar, as well as an unconventionality which is original and magnificent.

As I have already said, it is obvious enough that rules cannot be formulated to supply the lack of unerring and inherent taste; nor can one give a general definition that will enable any casual person to distinguish between the vulgar and slovenly in what is unconventional, and the original and magnificent. It is not easy even to give a formula, a touchstone, by

which admissible laxity can be set apart from ignorance. On general principles, however, it is safe to say this much: that apparent departures from rule and precept are not to be condemned when their irregularity is apparent only. Language ultimately rests upon a psychological foundation, and while a mode of expression may not conform to a mechanical rule, it may still be thoroughly defensible because it admits of a simple psychological explanation. Language is the concrete expression of thought, and its forms must therefore be in harmony with the actual workings of the mind. Consequently, when one is not writing or speaking in the most careful and academic fashion it is entirely admissible to let the words, the phrases, and the sentences have a freer play, and to allow to them the full mobility and sinuosity of the thought that prompts their utterance. The man of one style is as greatly to be pitied as the man whose wardrobe contains but a single suit of clothes, and he will often present as curious a spectacle. To discuss the trivialities of daily life in the stately diction of a Gibbon is as absurd as to pronounce a funeral sermon in the colloquial phrases of the smoking-room;

and it is only a person of imperfect education who will object to conversational idioms in the writer whose themes are those of ordinary life.

To give some of the simplest instances of variant usage that readily occur to one, there is, for example, the matter of collective nouns. One person will say, "The company *have* decided to introduce a change," while another person will say, "The company *has* decided." The second speaker will declare that the word "company" is singular in its form and therefore must have a singular verb; the first speaker will reply that in uttering his sentence his mind looked to the individuals composing the company rather than to the company in its compact entirety, and that in consequence he employed the verb in the plural. In England the word "government," when used of the English government, is always regarded as a plural, because to the English mind it does not mean the sovereign, but the members of the ministry, — a body continually changing. In our own country "government" is a sort of abstract noun denoting a political entity, something that goes on continually and does not

change, so that we always use with it a verb in the singular number. It is odd, because it is so ideally consistent, that the English in speaking of an autocratic government like the Russian vary their syntactical usage and say, for instance, "The Russian government *has* decided." This difference, I think, arises quite unconsciously; and if so, it is a very interesting illustration of psychological influence at work in language. Of late years "United States" has come to be employed in this country as a noun in the singular number, and this usage is entirely proper; for the term to most minds has ceased to have any suggestion of plurality about it, but is an expression for the nation as a whole, the unity of the thought blotting out the plurality of the form, and giving us, therefore, in two words a whole chapter of constitutional history; since fifty years ago, when particularism was in the ascendant, the plural verb was universally employed. It is pedantic to object to the colloquial use of such expressions as "more universal," "more perfect," and "entire unanimity." Of course, superficially viewed, these expressions are incorrect, as there cannot be degrees of univer-

sality or of perfection or of unanimity; yet what is really meant by "more perfect," for example, is "more nearly perfect," while as to "entire unanimity" this is even more defensible, for unanimity may exist in different spheres, — that is to say, a few persons may be unanimous or many persons may be unanimous, or all mankind may be unanimous, and "entire unanimity" refers to unanimity among those who constitute the greatest number thought of. Such an expression as "these sort of people" is not book language; yet it is psychologically sound nevertheless, since "kind-of-people" really connotes plurality, and therefore the prefixed demonstrative pronoun in the plural is in perfect harmony with the essential thought, although it does not harmonise with the verbal form employed. When we come to such an expression as "It is me," we are getting to the borderland which separates the admissible from the inadmissible. A person, however, is not necessarily nor even presumably to be regarded as ignorant who uses this construction in his casual conversation. As a matter of fact, almost everyone has done so at some time or other. It is simply a bit of

carelessness arising from a general tendency to use the objective case after any verb whatever and to ignore the nature of a neuter verb. Some writers have tried to explain the use of "It is me" as representing an analogy in sound to the corresponding expressions "It is he," and "It is she." As Professor George R. Carpenter puts it:

> "It is me" has become a stereotyped, idiomatic, colloquial expression, used without hesitation by the mass of the people and shunned only by the fastidious. . . . "Me" bears in form and sound a closer analogy to "he" and "she" than "I" does, and so would seem more natural than "I."

This theory, however, is demolished by the simple fact that the persons who seriously say "It is me" do not say "It is he" and "It is she," but they rather say with equal ignorance "It is him" and "It is her."

Where departures from strict rule and precept do not involve an utter violation of the most fundamental principles of language, and where there can be shown to exist a psychological explanation of them, then one may feel quite safe in using them colloquially. But when they are, in their very essence,

monstrosities of speech, and when it is impossible to find any defence for them except in a vague appeal to "usage," then they should be shunned as leading to the breaking down of all regard for form and as vitiating and corrupting a nice sense of linguistic decency.

This matter of usage, indeed, is a very delicate subject. Usage, to be sure, makes language, and it is very sensible to regard it with liberality as a great criterion in all that involves linguistic principles. This liberality, however, should always be an enlightened and critical liberality. It should recognise that there is usage and usage, that a crude expression in a writer of repute is no better than when it is used by a penny-a-liner, and that the masterly, high-bred, aristocratic carelessness of a man of perfect taste is quite as far removed from a slovenly and stupid carelessness as it is from a pedantic scrupulosity — the *obscura diligentia* which Terence once rebuked. The *exemplar vitiis imitabile* is just the one thing against which a discriminating person ought to be always on his guard; and one should never overlook the fact that faults and errors of taste are no less faulty and erroneous when they are embedded like

flies in amber in the pages of some otherwise impeccable writer.

Perhaps the best illustration of what I mean can be found in the ever-burning question of the "retained object." The retained object is a noun used in the objective case after a passive verb, as, for example, "I was given a book." Now when we look at a sentence such as this, we see that the subject is "I," and that the verb is in the passive voice; and then one asks what is the construction of the word "book." It cannot, in the nature of things, be governed by a passive verb, and it is, therefore, in the objective case all by itself, with nothing to govern it and having no logical and grammatical relation to the sentence. There are two ways in which this preposterous locution has been defended. The first defence is perhaps most fully given by Mr. Herbert J. Davenport, whose ideas on the subject are contained in the following paragraph: —

It is necessary to note that in some few cases the passive verb is found to take an object. It is none the less a passive verb, — that is to say, the subject is acted upon, the force passing back upon it, but the force of the verb passes as well in another direction,

to another recipient. . . . In such sentences as "I made him a present," "I offered him help," "They denied him admission," etc., there is a transitive verb followed by both a direct and an indirect object. If we were to seek for the strict equivalent of these sentences in the passive form, we should have for a new subject what was in the other voice the direct object; for example, "A present was made (to) him (by) me," etc. Here is clearly the passive voice, and as clearly an indirect or (dative) object following. If, however, the dative in the active voice is made the subject, as it often is, it becomes necessary to retain as direct object in the passive form what was subject in the active form. It need cause no confusion to find direct or indirect objects after passive verbs; the question is one of use and not of form or order. In fact, when a verb takes two objects in the active, there is room for but one of them as subject in the passive.

There are doubtless persons who in reading over this will think it quite profound because it muddles them; and in argument, next to convincing a man the best thing is to muddle him. I have myself gone over the quoted paragraph more than once and have patiently endeavoured to extract its meaning. Perhaps I, too, may have been muddled; but after making all necessary allowance for the

limitations of my intellect, I believe that I have at last got at the marrow of its meaning, and to make this meaning clearer to the casual reader I will paraphrase it in the form of a pleasant little dialogue:

Q. — Does the passive verb admit an object after it?

A. — Yes, the passive verb admits an object after it, because persons use it in that way.

Q. — Why is it right for persons to use it in that way?

A. — Because the passive verb admits an object after it.

This is, to be sure, an argument — the sort of argument which is given in examination papers on formal logic. And the bright young student who finds it there will, if he is well up in his subject, describe it technically as a *petitio principii*, or colloquially as an argument that begs the question, or in the plain vernacular as "whipping the devil round the stump."

The second excuse for the retained object is that which is based upon the fact that distinguished authors have occasionally used it, and that in consequence, although it violates

a fundamental principle of our language, we must simply say nothing, but accept it with a sort of reverent awe. I quote a passage from Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury's *History of the English Language:*

> The discussion of the use of the passive belongs strictly to syntax, and finds properly no place here; and it is only necessary to repeat what has been previously said, that in the freedom with which, and in the extent to which, the passive is employed, English has gone far beyond other cultivated tongues. Such phrases as "He was given a book," "He was told the truth," and the like, run back to the Middle English period, and occur in all the great writers of our tongue. Expressions like the one in the following line,—
>
> *Be not denied access*, stand at her doors,
> (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, Act 1. sc. 4) —
>
> are often ignorantly condemned by those who are unaware that these exemplify one of the most thoroughly established and characteristic idioms of the English language.

Professor Lounsbury's argument apparently is this: Shakespeare was the greatest genius who ever expressed his thoughts in the English tongue; he was so marvellous a

writer that his usage alone is sufficient to justify and establish any form of speech that he employed; he used the retained object; and therefore the retained object is now to be regarded as "a thoroughly established and characteristic idiom of the English language." Very well; but the curious mind will not rest fully satisfied with this until it has received an answer to another question which at once arises. Shakespeare not only employs the retained object, but he also at times — in fact many times — uses a plural subject with a singular verb. Is this also to be regarded as a thoroughly established and characteristic idiom of the English language? And if not, why not? The great Shakespeare used it, and yet I doubt whether Professor Lounsbury would allow a student of his to say "They is," or "Misfortunes was." Still, there is Shakespeare's authority staring him in the face. Does it not justify one monstrosity as fully as the other? Or would it not be better, perhaps, to take a somewhat more reasonable view of the whole thing and to assume that Shakespeare, like other men, was sometimes careless in what he wrote, and that when his carelessness took the form of adopting an ex-

pression that can have no possible philosophical defence, he is to be avoided and not imitated. Suppose Sir Isaac Newton, or Laplace, or Sylvester in some of their calculations had, in hastily adding up a column of figures, made out the sum of seven and eight to be sixteen. Ought we to accept this computation as embodying a new and sacred mathematical fact? I leave the answering of this question to Professor Lounsbury.

It is odd, indeed, to observe how many persons there are who believe that any usage whatsoever can be justified because it occurs sporadically in some standard writer. This justification assumes, in the first place, that there exist writers of English whose style and usage are absolutely immaculate; that these demigods never make any slips whatever; and it assumes also (which is even more absurd) that whatever is done by them is done with entire consciousness and intention. Yet none of these suppositions is by any possibility a true one. The best of writers will at times be careless, and will introduce some stray locution unintentionally because he hears it used about him in casual conversation, and thus allows it

to slip into what he writes, just as the most cultivated man will now and then in conversation revert to some half rustic or wholly ungrammatical expression with which he happened to be familiar in his boyhood. One of the great Latinists of the time of the Renaissance, who had attained to an absolutely Ciceronian perfection in his Latin style, made it a rule never to listen to a word of Latin spoken by others lest the mere hearing of unrythmical sentences or the casual use of barbarisms and solecisms should make his own ear less absolutely sensitive to the requirements of a perfect style. Again, there are writers who set down their thoughts with a certain carelessness as to details, trusting to the judgment and the taste of the well-trained proof-reader to eliminate all blemishes from the printed page. And these writers are not necessarily the ones who feel contempt for literary form. Take Mr. Henry James, for instance. I am sure that no one *a priori* would select him as being an author capable of disregarding the niceties of verbal expression. His thought is so subtle, his sense of word-values is so delicate, his fondness for minute analysis carries him always

so near the vanishing point, as to make it appear absolutely certain that he could never let a manuscript go from his hands with a single *i* undotted or a single sentence otherwise than structurally perfect. Yet as a matter of fact Mr. James's manuscripts are often very slovenly. The sentences are sometimes incomplete and even ungrammatical; the phrases are imperfect; and when the proof-reader goes over the galley proofs for the first time, he finds again and again that he is wandering in a mental daze through zeugmas and anacolutha and unintentional ellipses. Altogether, then, usage is valuable as a guide only when the appeal to it is made with insight, and intelligence, and wise discrimination.

It is an open question, as to which the present writer must confess that he has not yet made up his mind, whether the teaching of English grammar in any strictly technical sense ought to begin before the learner's intellect has reached a condition of comparative maturity. But, assuming that it should, then this teaching ought to be the very best, the very furthest removed from dusty dogmatism, and the most attractive that the class-room

ever sees. For, as a rule, no subject that is taught to-day is so poorly and unintelligently taught as English, while none is actually so important as being the foundation and underpinning of every possible type of education. It is shameful to see our very colleges filled with students who seldom set down three consecutive sentences that do not reek with solecisms of expression, of syntax, and of style; while not a few, when they leave the college halls, the winners of a university degree, make blunders even of orthography that might well disgrace a swineherd.

The ideal teaching of English would not, at first, be based upon a text-book at all, but it would be wholly oral. An instructor combining a scholar's breadth of knowledge with the finest literary taste and a sane perception of what the young mind will grasp most eagerly, would sit down with a class of two or three and tell them interesting things about the language to whose use they have been born. He would give them some idea of the history of our tongue, of how it rose from the humble position of a mere provincial dialect to the stately dignity of a great world-language; he would explain just how its

growth went hand in hand with the political and commercial and intellectual development of those who spoke it; he would sketch the process of its enrichment, and make it clear by illustrations how it has drawn its marvellous vocabulary from every other speech, and how its very words embody the history of our Anglo-Saxon civilisation. He would compare the literary forms of expression with the popular, and would try to give a sense of what is admirable in each locution; and then he would explain with continual illustration and example the nice distinctions of variant usage, pointing out how in one way force is gained and how in another harmony and grace; and thus he would gradually bring their minds to a genuine appreciation of the vital interest of a theme whose importance to every one of us is just as marked as is its fascination. And when he had reached this point they would be ready to accept, not only with sound understanding, but with zestful eagerness, the purely technical side of grammar and of rhetoric; for these two ought to be combined in English teaching. The learner would not then regard the rules and principles as dull, unmeaning dogmatism, but as clues to something that is

really worth his while, as keys that can unlock a wondrous jewel-casket, as the title to a gift that may enable him to charm, convince, delight, and entertain; for these things are the heritage of him who truly masters all the glorious resources of our mother tongue, so rich, so manly, so harmonious, so strong, and so majestic.

THE LITTLE TOUCHES

The Little Touches

TO possess the gift of nice discrimination is to attain to a position among the small, select, but very influential number of those who are intellectually enlightened. The vast majority of human beings, when they draw distinctions, draw them wholly in the rough, as though they were sorting potatoes into piles. They have a few general categories in which they class all their experiences and observations of life, and to which they refer what they regard as their opinions. A thing is good or it is bad; it is expedient or it is inexpedient; it is praiseworthy or it is censurable; it is perfect or it is imperfect; it is beautiful or it is not. They never have any difficulty in deciding just what they ought to think about anything whatever, and they are always quite satisfied with their own judgments. The subtle shades of difference that arise from differences of time and place and circumstance, the half-tints, the elusive varia-

tions, the "values" — these things seldom reach their consciousness, or if they do, it is only in a vague, unreal way, which at the most does nothing more than puzzle and bewilder.

The art, then, which appeals to the majority of men must be a very simple art, or they will never know it to be art at all. Indeed, the occultation of art, and even its occasional suppression, are often almost necessary if one desires to be intelligible to the mass of men. As they draw their own distinctions very broadly by intellectual rule-of-thumb, so will they expect that others shall so draw them lest the real meaning should be doubtful. To the necessity of considering this craving for the obvious, the drama, for example, owes so many of its absurd conventional traditions. As the ancient actors had a certain kind of mask which denoted that the wearer of it was supposed to be a slave, and another kind of mask to mark the character as a parasite, and another for the festive youth, and another for the virtuous parent, so in the popular drama of these later times, the villain, if he be a villain of the lower orders, must be more or less repellent in appearance, and if he be of

a superior position — a wicked baronet, for instance, or an evil-minded count — he must at times frown darkly and show his gleaming teeth from underneath a black moustache, and hiss his words out like a serpent. If he did not, he would not meet the general public's notion of what a villain ought to be, and it would be felt with some uneasiness that his villainy was not so villainous as complete dramatic perspicuity demands. In a lesser way this same rule guides the whole art of acting as it has been popularly understood. Persons in real life, even when they are very seriously stirred in their emotions, do not usually wring their hands and lift them up toward heaven and then rush off with sobs and shrieks. If they are women they may cry a little, and if they are men they will look very glum, or very earnest, or very angry, but they do not transform themselves into semi-maniacs. Yet on the stage they must do just this very thing, or else the intelligent public will not understand the episode or believe that the characters are really moved at all. Therefore, the multitude at large will admire a Forrest or a Lucille Western, but will look askance upon the perfect art of Duse — the art which mimics

nature with supreme success. Exaggeration everywhere is necessary, because the unenlightened mind wants all its distinctions ready drawn for it and labelled in large letters.

The same thing also is quite true in literature. The moral of a story must be always written down, and the characters must be so drawn that they can instantly be classified in one of the accepted categories. If they are not, if they are drawn with the complexity of motive and of action which distinguishes both men and women in real life, and if their motives and their actions are delicately suggested rather than displayed in a crude, circus-poster, scare-head sort of way, then their significance entirely eludes the unenlightened reader. He wishes Pecksniff to be always canting, he wants Uriah Heep to be continually talking of his 'umbleness, and Harold Skimpole to be smiling a perpetually optimistic smile. Then he will understand these characters. He will be comfortably certain that Pecksniff is a hypocrite, and Uriah Heep a sneak, and Harold Skimpole an unpractical, unworldly person. The necessary exaggeration has been introduced, the label has been conspicuously applied, and the reader feels sure that in the

act of reading he is making no mistakes. Give him, however, two such characters even as Blanche Amory and Becky Sharp, and while he will recognise them both as being reprehensible, yet he will be often puzzled because they are not at all times evil, nor will he have the slightest understanding of the subtle art that differentiates them. A character like George Moore's Mildred Lawson or John Norton they will never understand at all, and will think it simply rather commonplace and tiresome. They will talk in a superior way of Henry James as "too much spun out," and they will criticise the very best of all his work for "not coming to a regular end, you know." They will miss the exquisite psychology in Maupassant and call him simply "an immoral Frenchman," and they will think of Marie Corelli and Hall Caine as being very able because you always know exactly what they mean. They will find Matthew Arnold prosy and pedantic, with an obvious unsoundness in his theological opinions. They will prefer Longfellow to any other poet, and they will sometimes read Will Carleton and George H. Boker. In painting they will find Turner unintelli-

gible and will dismiss Burne-Jones as "queer." In music they will most enjoy Sir Arthur Sullivan.

I am speaking now of "educated" persons, of persons who have had the usual academic training and who do not commit any very flagrant solecisms either in their social life or in their speech. Indeed, they usually give much serious thought to both their manners and their language, watching carefully the latest things in usage and hastening to master and to explain them. They eagerly catch up the latest novelties in pronunciation and those that are unusual and rococo, such as "shedule" for schedule, "en*er*vate," "discre*pan*cy," and "Cle*o*patra;" and they carefully divide the words "don't you" so as not to say "donchu," though this partial crasis is allowable in every language. It is not knowledge, in the ordinary sense, of which they show a lack, and it is not because of any purely intellectual defect that they are never for an instant to be classed with the Enlightened. The fundamental bar to their enlightenment lies in the absence of that curious sixth sense which renders the perpetual thought of self unnecessary, and that

sublimated taste which makes of its possessors a very special caste who may be recognised at once, not by their observance or their disregard of social rules and educational canons, but by the little touches that make both speech and manners perfect, and that impart the exquisite and final finish. The unenlightened person may have all the training in the world, yet he will never quite discriminate to the vanishing point; there will be something in his intercourse with others that will surely strike the chords of dissonance, and that will grate and jar, if only in the subtlest way.

The enlightened person may be soonest recognised in what he says and writes; for it is in language that the little touches are most truly omnipresent. In a positive way these cannot be defined. They are perceptible most of all in a perfect harmony between word and phrase and the occasion when the word and phrase are uttered. The nice tact, the instinctive adaption of means to end, the delicate understanding of just how far one may go in any given direction, the mental modulations, so to speak, the shadings, the tintings, the half-lights, the recognition of

to bed; he "disrobes" and does not undress; he will promise to "correspond" but not to write; he will ask you to "desist" but not to stop. If he is extremely unenlightened he will say that he is "partial" to such and such a thing, and perhaps at table will offer to "assist" you to the cheese. This sort of person is almost as low as the one who takes pleasure in alluding to his "social position" and with whom men and women are always "ladies" and "gentlemen." The last two words are really shibboleths, and we may form a very accurate estimate of the degree of any one's enlightenment by the manner in which he uses them. The general distinction, stated broadly, will allow a freer use of "lady" than of "gentleman." One seldom needs to use the latter word, whereas the former is at times quite necessary in order to avoid a shade of ambiguity which might be more or less embarrassing. Thus, when a lady says that she was lunching with a "man," the assumption is always made that the person in question is a gentleman: whereas if a man says that he was lunching with "a woman," there is a dangerous little implication which would not exist did he use the word "lady" in-

stead. The plural "women" is safer than the singular; but these are matters which the enlightened person will appreciate for himself, while the unenlightened will not understand even after everything has been explained.

Allied somewhat with a prim preference for the superficially elegant is that jocular use of "literary" language, which is common with certain people, especially with women, and most of all perhaps New England women, with whom literary allusion is something of a fad. It has been neatly caught by Henry James in his story, *A New England Winter*, where one of the characters, Pauline Mesh, speaks this sort of Bostonese.

> She was accustomed to express herself in humorous superlatives, in pictorial circumlocutions; and had acquired in Boston the rudiments of a social dialect, which, to be heard in perfection, should be heard on the lips of a native. Mrs. Mesh had picked it up; but it must be confessed that she used it without originality. It was an accident that on this occasion she had not expressed her wish for her tea by saying that she should like a pint or two of that Chinese fluid.

And so Mrs. Mesh smilingly describes a young friend of hers as a "false and faithless

man," and beseeches him not to "sully this innocent bower with those fearful words." This sort of thing, in the end, tends to vulgarise language because it leads to the frequent use of fine and very expressive words in a trivial way — a result which is effected partly through conversation and very largely through newspaper writing. There are few vocables, for instance, more exquisitely suited to their meanings than "ghastly," "weird," "uncanny," and "fierce," yet when one hears that somebody's dinner-party was "a ghastly failure," or that a certain lady's hat was "weird," or that the failure of two trains to connect was "uncanny," or that a young woman is "fierce" to go to a reception, then one feels regretfully that the resources of our language are being impoverished and its expressiveness impaired. The newspapers make this worse, for they harp upon some naturally fine word or phrase until it becomes ridiculous and has to be eliminated from one's serious vocabulary. Ever since the recent war with Spain was fairly under way, the word "hero" has been rather cheap; and the last presidential campaign placed "peerless" in the Index Expurgatorius of discriminating

persons; just as the Garfield-Hancock contest made the fine adjective "superb" appear ridiculous. Some newspaper man once hit upon a very picuresque metaphor when he wrote of a disabled steamer that "The ocean greyhound came limping into port;" but since that time so many ocean greyhounds have limped into port and done various other things as to make it no more possible for a person of taste to use this expression than it would be for him to describe a man or an object as falling with a "sickening thud."

The truly enlightened person uses language with entire carelessness, but it is a masterly carelessness that always keeps within the limit of good taste. It is usually colloquial, but not vulgarly colloquial. It draws freely upon slang, yet always upon the slang which a gentleman can use. It never savours of the gutter, and it is employed either for its expressiveness or for its humour. It is, indeed, in the use of slang that the little touches become very subtle. One cannot lay down rules, yet certain general principles may be noted. In the first place, speaking broadly, the slang that is ephemeral will not be used save for the first few days after its appearance. Some

word or phrase appeals to the popular fancy, either because of its picturesqueness or for other reasons; and then the enlightened person will use it a few times; but as soon as it is heard in the mouths of everyone he will discard it as he would discard a pair of soiled gloves or a collar that is frayed. Thus, when the late Mr. Ward McAllister made his famous social classification, it was all very well for a time to speak of The Four Hundred; but any one who does it now is, by that very fact, to be ruled out of the ranks of those who know anything at all.

Of permanent slang one will avoid the part which belongs to those sections of society that lie between the highest and the lowest. Thieves' slang, for instance, is sufficiently interesting, because of its obscurity, to make its introduction sometimes proper; so that one may, without danger of being mistaken for something that he is not, speak of money as "the long green," and may describe an untimely revelation as "blowing the gaff." Some bits of boyish slang are also quite admissible, as, for example, "doing stunts" and "a licking" and "bully." The slang of the clubs and of university men is also quite

consistent with good taste. But when you make a statement and someone says "That's right" or "Sure," intending it for an assent, or says "I don't think" or "Nit," intending it for a disagreement, then you may know that you have met a person who is void of the nicer understanding. I once heard a very pretty young lady in a moment of vexation say "Hully Gee!" Had she sworn a vigorous oath or two it would not have been unpardonable; but what she did say seemed to me for the moment to transform her on the spot from a very charming girl into a bedraggled guttersnipe. The trouble is that when the would-be linguistic purist finally gets it through his head that slang is in itself admissible, he cannot see that there is slang and slang, and he will, for example, think it jocular to speak of money as "scads" and of an umbrella as a "bumbershoot."

There are many words that in themselves as words are perfectly respectable both in their origin and for their history, yet which none the less, for various reasons, it is better to avoid. Among these, for example, are the adjectives "genteel" and "elegant," the former being utterly impossible, and the second need-

ing to be used with much discrimination. It is extremely crude to employ commercial language in ordinary conversation, as in speaking of a person as "well-posted" or of what is left of anything as "the balance." Literary journalists who discuss "the literary output" ought themselves to be put out. A slight provincial touch is given by the frequent use of "minister" instead of "clergyman," and when one refers to a clergyman as a "preacher," the case is hopeless. A person who will say these things may be expected when he happens to be ill to tell you that he "has been poorly for a spell."

There is another provincial usage, out of which it is to be hoped that the American people will, in the course of time, be educated. A concrete illustration will sufficiently explain it. When Mr. McKinley was inaugurated President, the newspapers had a great deal to say about the members of his household, describing them with infinite detail, after the usual fashion of the newspaper man who is writing at space rates. They spoke of his wife, of course, as "Mrs. McKinley," but they always mentioned his aged mother as "Mother McKinley." This was provincial

and disgusting to a degree, and it is surprising that no one ever reverted to the dignified New England usage which would have mentioned the dowager as "Madam McKinley." I should hardly have thought it necessary to recall this detestable bit of social ignorance had not President McKinley himself been guilty of it during a journey of his through the South. Visiting Montgomery, Alabama, he was presented to some of the members of Lieutenant Hobson's family, and in the course of a public speech which he made soon after, he had something to say about the probable pride and pleasure which animated "Mother Hobson." Now this form of speech is not only in itself crude and wholly alien to the little touches which give distinction, but its mental associations also are unpleasant; since it is a form of speech that suggests Mother Goose and Mother Bunch, and brings to mind some wrinkled, blear-eyed beldame — a wizened crone, a raucous hag; and when Mr. McKinley adopted it, it was so out of keeping with the dignity which usually characterises all his public utterances as to resemble the speech of one whose evenings in early youth were

spent in some small back-woods country "store" in the society of those who pendulously dangle their loutish legs over the sides of an empty cracker-barrel.

Provincial also are "quit," and "locate," and "location," for when you hear them used, your mind begins to brace itself for a possible mention of "victuals" and "silk hats," and "vests," and "dress suits," and "lady friends." A person who has "lady friends" is the sort of person who addresses a physician affably as "Doc," and who, if he admires him, will probably describe him as "a brainy man" and speak of him as being "raised" in such-and-such a place. This is the sort of person also who habitually ignites matches by scratching them upon the seat of his trousers, who wears celluloid collar, and who eats peas from his knife-blade. Less grievous than the last quoted expressions but no less incompatible with enlightenment is such an adjective as "stylish" (except when applied to dress), and "tasty," and the word "dépôt" used of a railway station. The word "gentlemanly" is to my mind very suspicious, although it is not in itself a necessary test. It surely, however, is not a compliment to say of anyone that he

is "gentlemanly" (that is, that he is "like a gentleman,"), since this implies that he is not one, but is at best an admirable imitation, such as a well-known French diplomat once found President Van Buren. Someone may say that this objection would apply as well to "manly," but the two words are not comparable. When you say of a man that he is "manly," since the fact of his being a man is already known, you are merely telling him that he has those qualities which a man ought properly to have; but when you say of him that he is "gentlemanly," this does not by any means assume that he is a gentleman, but only that he is a man who bears a certain resemblance to a gentleman.

Akin to that particular form of crudity which is always covering up commonness of thought by attempted "elegance" of language, is the desire for pedantic grammatical accuracy. It is here again that the enlightened person is very sharply distinguished from the unenlightened, for here again he can be careless without the carelessness which verges upon ignorance. Loose syntax is in itself as necessary to colloquial comfort as easy-fitting clothes are sometimes necessary to the com-

fort of the body; but just as one does not wear a smoking-jacket and slippers at a wedding breakfast, and just as his smoking-jacket and slippers when he does wear them are, or ought to be, well made, so the enlightened person adapts his easy-going language to the proper times and places, and his lack of adherence to rule and precept never goes beyond certain clearly defined boundaries. The unenlightened person may say of a thing that it "looks beautifully," or use the expression "between you and I," just as he may, if he is very, very benighted, say "you was;" but these are not the sort of slips that are compatible with distinction. They are to be expected from those who call a cab a "hack" and who describe a housemaid as "the girl," which is, of course, not quite so bad as to speak of her as "the help," but which, nevertheless, is the linguistic earmark of a class — a class that splits its infinitives, and thinks that Fonetik Refawrm is scholarly. The enlightened person may, however, speak of "those sort of things" and use a plural pronoun where the antecedent is an indefinite singular, as in such a sentence as "If anyone comes, tell *them* I am out," and perhaps he may even say, when

very colloquial indeed, "It is me"; but all these things and others like them rest in reality upon a psychological basis, and are developed on the principle either of Synesis or of Analogy.

As to the use of Americanisms, there are some very nice distinctions to be made. A person who studiously tries to discard all forms of speech which the British call "American," is just as crude and bigoted and unenlightened as is the Chauvinist who shudders at a Briticism. There are some Americanisms which it is well to relegate to the undiscriminating, just as there are many Briticisms whose use at once proclaims the wholly self-conscious linguistic ape. One should "guess" with much reserve, and it is not well to speak of shops as "stores." On the other hand, to speak of "riding" when "driving" is what is really meant, may be inaccurate, but it is not reprehensible. Even an enlightened person can "mail" a letter instead of "posting" it, or if it is a post-card rather than a letter, there is no particular reason why he should refrain from calling it a "postal card." Almost any Americanism is safer, in fact, than some particular Briticisms,

the user of which must necessarily be quite self-conscious in his employment of them, with a self-consciousness which is fatal to real urbanity and breeding. When an American enters a railway station, and asks for the "booking office," and when he speaks of the checks for his baggage as "the brasses," then we are instantly aware that he is not merely unenlightened, but is just an ordinary idiot.

Some Americans who try to be English in their enunciation are propagating a curious superstition in pronouncing the word "house" as though it were "häouse" — giving it, in fact, the rustic pronunciation which has survived in some portions of New England. They do this because they have been told that it is English, and so it is; but it is Cockney English, the English of the costermongers and street sweepers of London, and is no more to be heard in the mouth of an English gentleman than are the superfluous "h" and the diphthongal "a;" so that Americans who adopt it are taking infinite trouble to ape a vulgarism which, when they use it in the presence of a cultivated Englishman, ranks them at once in his mind with the caddish and the ignorant. If one were consistently

to Anglicise his speech and were ultimately to attain perfection in its use so that he would employ it spontaneously, it might, perhaps, be well enough; though he would show a certain lack of enlightenment in having thought it worth his while to take such infinite trouble for so pitiful an end; but as a matter of fact, I have never yet found a Briticised American who did not at some time or other betray the artificial character of his assumption. I remember once meeting on a Cunard steamer a Congressman from Boston, a very charming man, and one so void of all pretentiousness as to convince me that his Anglicised mode of speech was probably due to his having been educated at one of the great English public schools, with a supplementary course at Oxford or at Cambridge; but at last, while chatting about his experience with horses, he told me that on one occasion while riding he "got a cropper," and then I knew that his British mode of speech was nothing but a sham, for an Englishman "*comes* a cropper" and does not "get" one. Persons of this sort afford as pathetic a spectacle to the Enlightened as do those who in employing the broad "a"

because it is so English, introduce it ignorantly into words where the English never use it, saying, for example, "fawncy" for "fancy," in which an educated Englishman always sounds the "a" as flatly as any Philadelphian.

If the enlightened person is discreet in his use of the British language, he must be even more discreet in his use of French. He will use a French word when he wishes to, but he will wish to only when it is particularly expressive and not readily represented by anything in English. This, however, is less important than the avoidance of those French and pseudo-French expressions which are in the mouths of everyone, and which were culled perhaps at first from the list that may be found in the back of Webster's Dictionary. To speak of a *nom de plume* is pretty bad, but it is not so bad as to say *fin de siècle*, which long ago became the property of the vulgar; while an individual who says that something is coming on the *tapis*, or speaks of a *début*, or of *bon ton*, is probably one who has spent six weeks in Europe on a Cook's excursion ticket, and who winks darkly when he mentions his visit to the French capital, which he calls "Paree."

The Little Touches

There are some little touches in written as well as in spoken language, that are extremely characteristic and important. There is nothing which reveals the unenlightened person half so quickly in his correspondence as any usage which appears to be indicative of haste; and of these indicia the most common and the most objectionable are abbreviated forms. To receive a letter containing such words as "Xmas," "tho'," "photo," and "rec'd," affects one as would the combination of a Fedora hat with evening clothes; and such letters, when written by men, are usually written by the sort of men who sign their names in such abbreviated forms as "Geo.," "Wm.," "Chas.," "Jas.," and "Jno." A shade less objectionable is the abbreviation of military titles when prefixed to proper names; but if this is carried further into spheres where such a thing is little known, it marks the acme of bad taste. At the present time this last trick seems to be confined to Massachusetts newspapers, which speak of "Pres. McKinley," "Sec. Long," "Sen. Lodge," and "Cong. Sherman," while one of them lately attained to a climax beyond which nothing can ever go, by mention-

ing the German Kaiser as "the Emp. Wm." An elliptical style, by which brevity is attained through the omission of words, need probably not be mentioned, as the persons who would use it outside of their business correspondence are so very far down in the scale as to be scarcely worth considering at all. In addressing letters and in dating them, abbreviations are undoubtedly admissible; yet I have always felt a genuine admiration for those among my correspondents who write out everything in full, as, for example, "January the twenty-eighth," "Seven hundred and sixty-three Albemarle Avenue," and so on. There is a certain aristocratic suggestion of leisure about this sort of thing that appeals to one, and that is thoroughly consistent.

Of course the careful avoidance of all the various things that have been here condemned is not necessarily a proof of real enlightenment, but it goes a long way in that direction; and it may, at any rate, be said to indicate a degree of illumination that is very hopeful. One need not sneer and say that these things are quite petty and unworthy of a serious enumeration. In the life that we are living, the small things are often greater than the

great ones. They come much oftener into our daily lives, and they reveal much more of underlying truth. In statesmanship and in diplomacy it is the little strokes that by a continuous accumulation bring about supreme results. In warfare it is the attention to minute detail that gains great victories. In love it is far less the sacrifices and the proffer of unlimited devotion than it is the little touches, the myriad little touches, that win a woman's heart. And in the intercourse of human beings it is a nice regard for what is delicate, and fine, and exquisite that marks the difference between the Usual Man and Woman and those others who possess the rare and unmistakable insignia of distinction.

THE PROGRESS OF "FONETIK REFAWRM"

The Progress of "Fonetik Refawrm"

THERE is in the city of New York a firm of publishers whose energetic optimism and tireless activities have always found the field of their nominal occupation to be prosaic, cramping, and hopelessly commonplace. They do, indeed, occasionally publish books, or at least I have so understood; but the work which is the nearest to their hearts is the instant abolition of the traffic in strong drink, the universal reign of total abstinence, and the immediate elimination from the human breast of all desire for stimulants and nicotine. Yet, of course, a trifling task like this, so absurdly simple, and as easy as rolling off a log, has very naturally left these earnest gentlemen with a good deal of spare time upon their hands, and they have very often been in danger of becoming seriously bored; so that, by way of filling in their idle moments

and preventing any waste of power, they have lately taken up another bagatelle in setting modestly about the reformation of the English language, and more particularly of its orthography. Some time ago they made a list of words of which the current spelling troubled them; and after thinking very hard indeed, and after conferring with some other very wise and thoughtful persons, they tabulated and printed all these words and spelled them in a new and better way, a way that was more pleasing both to the earnest publishers themselves and to the wise and thoughtful persons with whom they had conferred. Then they sent a copy of the list to many men throughout the length and breadth of our beloved country, — to authors, to teachers, to clergymen, to editors, to statesmen; and they announced that as soon as one hundred very eminent men should agree to adopt these new and better spellings, then the publishers who had made the list would also use them in their printing-office. Time passed; and now the publishers are carrying out their promise; for one hundred very eminent men *have* approved the list. And I know that these very eminent men are really very eminent,

because the publishers admit it frankly. They do not even attempt to deny it. And the very eminent men themselves have never published any contradiction of their own eminence. So it is all right.

Now, this is only one of a good many attempts that have been made to knock a few foundation-stones out of the orthographic structure of the English language, to substitute some other way of spelling for definite and accepted forms with which everyone is perfectly familiar, which have a meaning and a history of their own, and which ensure a practical uniformity in our printed books. Ever since old Noah Webster, that half-baked, priggish, and conceited pedant, first produced the book which several generations of abler men, by throwing out pretty nearly everything that he had put into it, have at last made over into a work of some authority, somebody or other has always been tinkering with reformed orthography. Josh Billings tried it; some theoretical persons in the American Philological Association have taken a hand at it; and, indeed, very seldom is any notorious crank kept awake at night by the toothache, without concocting before day-

light a brand-new scheme for the reform of English spelling.

Well, this sort of thing has been going steadily on for some three-quarters of a century, and the accepted forms have not been substantially altered in the usage of educated men. Perhaps this last attempt of the earnest publishers has shown the very fewest signs of producing any tangible results. So far as my observation goes, they will not see their list in vogue until long after the arrival of the Greek Kalends on which they shall have finally dethroned the demon Rum. In fact, only once have I seen their system publicly adopted. This solitary instance was when another publisher in a reckless moment sent out an advertisement of a religious book printed in large capitals, and with a sort of centrepiece which demanded sternly of the reader —

"Doo Yoo Beleev in Hel?"

— an entirely unnecessary question, since everyone who has ever had to do with spelling reformers is absolutely obliged to believe in "hel," or else to doubt both the efficiency and the reality of divine justice. I

should like to print this advertisement in full and to give the name of the publisher who fathered it; but there are considerations which deter me. Perhaps he has since reformed and is now honestly trying to lead a better life; in which case far be it from me to put any stumbling-blocks in the way of his upward struggle. It may be, too, that he has died; and if so, I shall reverently refrain from disturbing his repose and bringing shame upon his innocent children by linking their parent's name forever with the memory of a cacographic scandal.

The fact is that it is a good deal easier to propose a new system of spelling than to get any number of sensible people to adopt it. And the reason is obvious enough. In the first place, the accepted system *is* accepted and in possession; ~~and~~ ~~*beati possidentes*~~ is a ~~good old maxim that is based upon~~ a ~~fundamental~~ truth. The accepted spelling is also that in which our literature has been written down and printed for many generations. It gives a substantial uniformity. It has dignity. It is an essential part of the history of the English language. And, in the second place, it is not by any means

enough to show that this system is open to objection, that it is illogical, that it is inconsistent. One must also show that of the substitutes proposed for it, some one substitute, at least, is not equally objectionable and illogical and inconsistent. But, as a matter of fact, and apart from other considerations, against every one of the "reformed" methods it is easy to oppose the very arguments which the "reformers" hurl at the old accepted spelling.

To begin, the "reformers" tell us that the old spelling is supported by nothing but by prejudice, by custom, by convention, by sentiment. Well, if the remark be true, is not this a very strong support? Is there in fact any motive much stronger in the human mind than that which springs from custom and from sentiment? A thousand nice observances are based upon convention only. The world is ruled by sentiment. Depose custom, convention, and sentiment, and the whole social law will be smashed to atoms. It is only custom and convention, for example, that impose upon civilised human beings the necessity of wearing clothes in summer. Indeed, most of the arguments that would dis-

credit decency in spelling could be employed with equal force to discredit decency in costume. Just think of it for a moment. It is not natural to wear clothes when the thermometer is in the nineties. Primitive man, before he had been corrupted and enslaved by luxury and convention, wore no clothing; and he was hardier, freer, and happier without it. Clothing leads to arrogance, just as a knowledge of correct spelling leads to reprehensible pride. Clothing is a source of extravagance, of ostentation, of emulation. It even creates caste distinctions, just as literate and illiterate spellings do.

And the custom of wearing clothing is really quite absurd. Is not a top-hat as useless and essentially ridiculous as the silent letters in an English word? And just consider the amount of time that is lost in dressing and undressing! There are said to be persons who actually change their garments several times a day, — dressing for breakfast, dressing for out-door sports, putting on a frock-coat in the afternoon, and evening clothes for dinner! How preposterous! Indeed, the more I think of it the more I am convinced that the absurdities of clothing are

infinitely greater than the absurdities of the accepted English spelling; and I earnestly advise the "reformers" to tackle this crying evil first and to keep the spelling question in the background until they have reformed away our artificial, illogical, uncomfortable, and unnatural slavery to custom and the tailor. And if they would only accept this view, what a proof it would be of their own sincerity! How much more effective their spelling arguments would then become! In fact, if I shall ever have the pleasure of seeing a squad of the best-known spelling reformers strolling up Fifth Avenue some warm July afternoon *in puris naturalibus*, I really shall begin to think that there is something to be said for the system of spelling which these distinguished gentlemen so earnestly admire.

This question of saving time is another great point with the "reformers." They point to such words as "phthisic" and "bdellium" and "programme," and call strenuous attention to the silent letters which have no phonetic value when the words are spoken; and they speculate on how much precious time is wasted by literary men in writing them. It is indeed a solemn thought. That

acute and subtle Educationist, Dr. Krohn, who first discovered just how many thousandths of a second it takes a child to recognise each of the letters in the word *c-a-t*, could probably give the exact statistics on this point. It is too profound a problem for my poor wits; but I will concede, if I must, that an active writer might waste as much as three minutes and a half each day in writing silent letters. The case seems very clear, and I sorrowfully admit it. To be sure, all the decencies and proprieties of life take time. It takes time to brush one's teeth, to comb one's hair, to shave, to dress, to practise little social courtesies, to do the innumerable things that enter into every-day existence, just as it takes time to spell like an educated man and not like a horse-boy writing to a cook-maid. But what of it? Cultivated men and women gladly give this time; and the willingness to give it is the one thing that differentiates the civilised human being from the brutal, filthy savage. Time is money, to be sure; but there are things in life more valuable than either time or money, as everyone must recognise.

And there is a more or less practical side

to this matter, too. Some time ago a distinguished Educationist wrote a book to advocate the general introduction into schools of manual training. In the course of his remarks he became enthusiastic and philological; and it is always a dangerous thing for any man to be enthusiastic and philological at the same time. He appealed to etymology to show how the principle of manual training unconsciously lies at the base of our most fundamental conceptions of education. He cited the word "pædagogy," and being a spelling reformer (for educationists thrive on fads) he spelled the word "pedagogy." Then he went on to say that this word, being derived from the Latin *pes* (*ped-*) and *ago*, bears on its face a silent proof of how the training of some part of the body had always in men's subconsciousness been linked with the training of the mind. But when his book began to be generally read, one great Homeric laugh ran roaring across the continent at this lovely instance of *Volksetymologie*, and the poor man went into retirement for many days. Now, it is very certain that if he had only taken time to think of it, he would never have put down

on paper such a blunder as this, for he doubtless knew very much better than to do so, just as James Russell Lowell undoubtedly knew better than to derive, as he did, the word "polite" from the Greek πόλις. But the barbarous "reformed" spelling misled the Educationist for the moment; and just because he had learned to save himself the writing of a single "a," he became a temporary laughing-stock for educated men throughout the country. I do not believe that he is a spelling reformer any more, and I am very sure that he would have been willing to write that extra "a" five hundred times a week for the rest of his natural life rather than to have become, as he did, an educational joke. Every possible form of civilisation, in fact everything that contributes to man's comfort and convenience, demands time; but who of us would not be willing to spend three hours a day in dining properly *chez* Voisin, rather than to save two hours and fifty-five minutes of that time by furtively gobbling a plate of corned-beef hash in a John Street beanery?

But they tell us that the accepted spelling of English is inconsistent. Of course it is,

just as the English language itself is inconsistent. It is the inconsistency of the language that is mirrored in its spelling. Our English tongue, made up from heterogeneous and unrelated sources, with its blending of Saxon and French, of Scandinavian and Celtic, of Latin and Greek, of terms and phrases drawn from a dozen different sources, is from one point of view the most illogical and inconsistent language ever known. A highly scientific German once told me that in reading English he was always so painfully conscious of its mongrel character that he felt as though he were diving into a linguistic rag-bag. Yet none the less it is the grandest language ever heard upon the lips of men,—a wonderful instrument of music; a swift, unerring, highly tempered weapon; a vigorous, flexible, harmonious medium of thought, whose very slang is a marvel of power, and whose literature is instinct with the living soul of dignity and strength and beauty. English is not, from the German's point of view, scientific. There has, indeed, as yet, existed only one quite scientific language, and that is Volapük, invented by a German; yet we do not often hear people in the tram-

cars speaking Volapük, while English is supplanting every other form of speech, and is slowly but surely making its way through the uttermost parts of the earth to its ultimate position of the one great universal language. And the spelling is like the language. It is illogical, but it is picturesque; and the person who would prefer to it a machine-made system invented by pedants and propagated by cranks would prefer the flat monotony of a prairie to the bold and splendid scenery of the Alps, and would turn his back upon a Titian to hang upon his walls a tea-shop chromo.

The accepted spelling is inconsistent. But are the substitutes consistent? ~~I do not think that a single one of them is~~ not a single one is consistent. Take, for example, the list prepared by the publishers whom I have spoken of just now. Its spellings are supposed to be constructed on the basis of entire simplicity, rejecting all superfluous and silent letters and giving a purely phonetic expression to the natural sounds. Very well; then why do we find "Antichrist" instead of "Anticrist," "coquet" instead of "coket," "photograph" instead of "fotograf"? Why is the *o* preserved in

"courtesy"? Why do they still write the *w* in "wrapt," "wrencht," and "wreakt"? And why keep both the *c* and the *k* in "wreckt" and "shockt" when either one alone would give the sound sufficiently? Why write "bugle" and then insert a phonetically superfluous *e* in "beuty"? What, from a "reformer's" point of view, is the value of the *c* in "Czar"? And so I might go on indefinitely. Every one of these spellings is quite inconsistent with the principle professed by the "reformers," and is open to all the criticism which they lavish on the accepted forms.

But far more serious still is another fact. When they ask us to give up the historic spelling and to substitute a phonetic system, which particular system do they mean? For the "reformers" are not agreed among themselves. They squabble together with just as much acrimony as they display against their common enemy. Every reformer has his own pet system; and this spelling reform is like the private interpretation of the Scriptures. As soon as you admit that every individual may interpret the Bible for himself, you have exactly as many theologies as there

are ignoramuses who can manage to spell out a chapter in the King James Version; and so, as soon as you let go of the accepted orthography of English, a whole swarm of grotesque spellings will come buzzing about your ears, each claiming to be *the* only simple and scientific method. It might be all very well if the English-speaking peoples had an institution of recognised authority, like the Academies of France and Spain, to give us our linguistic law, to decide upon a single substitute, and to strengthen it with the sanction of their collective learning; but we have no such thing, and hence the chaos of cacography that overwhelms the person who is sincerely seeking for a truly scientific system. The list that I have mentioned presents only a few hundred altered spellings for acceptance, and tells us that these are quite enough. The American Philological Association would go still further, and reform the spelling of whole classes of English words. Yet both of these attempts are laughed to scorn as timid and illogical and feeble by the wilder fanatics of "refawrm," who very naturally say that if you are going to admit the necessity of change, why should you not change every-

thing once for all, and make a clean sweep of it, and put the orthography of English absolutely and entirely on a pure phonetic basis?

I really think that these persons are the only reformers who occupy a logical position; though even they cannot agree among themselves. For the more advanced of them would go much further even than a radical change of spelling. They would reconstruct the letters of the alphabet and give us a set of new characters fully in accord with the latest views of the most advanced phoneticists, — characters that shall represent the nicest distinctions of the *Lautlehre*, with little dots and inverted letters and interspersed italics and diacritical points. I remember that there is, or used to be, a journal published in the heart of Western Pennsylvania, which was devoted to this extreme kind of reform and was printed in the characters whose use its editors desired to see adopted by the whole English-speaking world. They sent it to me intermittently, and for several months I used to open it and put it aside under the impression that it was a publication in the Magyar or Polish or Czechish tongue brought out for the benefit of those interesting aliens who inhabit that

portion of the country, and who, when they are not engaged in organising strikes, amuse themselves by assassinating one another, — a most laudable occupation, in which I am sure that no judicious person would ever be anxious to discourage them. Well, one day I happened to look at this journal's pages a little more carefully than usual, and I was struck by the curious resemblance of some of its words to English forms of speech. Half an hour of patient study made it clear that it was, in fact, written in ordinary English and carefully disguised by nothing but the strictly scientific character of its orthography. I should like to reproduce a little of it here, but unfortunately the typographical resources of the publisher are entirely inadequate; for this simple and easy substitute for the old-time spelling is so very simple and easy that one can't even print a line of it without going to a type-foundry three months in advance and ordering a complete outfit of new type. I can, however, give a specimen of a system which many persons who are somewhat less radical prefer, and which imposes a somewhat slighter strain upon a printing-office. I select, as a means of illustrating this system of spell-

ing, that familiar and soulful little threnody which has been recited in so many homes throughout the land and which has touched so many sympathetic hearts. Thus it goes:

Litl Wili had ā muṅki
Claiming up ā yelô stik;
Hi sukt dhi yelô pānt ol of,
It mād him dethli sik;
Dhi huming top iz sailent now,
Dhi bol iz lād asaid,
And dhi muṅki duzent jump around
Sins litl Wili daid!

A great point is also made of the argument from authority. It is asserted (quite untruly) that the most eminent students of language are unanimously in favour of this so-called reform; and you will often hear cited with awe the vote of the American Philological Association which some years ago gave a sort of official sanction to a scheme of orthographic change. I am sorry that the Association did this thing; because with the mass of people its authority on such a subject has a weight which as a matter of fact it does not in any way deserve. But the question of spelling is not in reality at all a question of scholarship, but rather a question of taste;

and on questions of taste the American Philological Association as such is entitled to speak with no more weight than the Ancient Order of Hibernians or the Knights of Labour. Some time ago one of the most distinguished classical professors of Harvard University was asked why he never attended any of the meetings of the American Philological Association; and he replied with an air of unutterable boredom:

"Oh, because if I go I shall have to meet so many persons who wear black trousers!"

Very likely there are members of the American Philological Association who habitually eat peas with their knives, and perhaps drink out of finger-bowls; but their example will hardly result in the establishment of a new social canon.

The Association's dictum, however, has given a certain amount of aid and comfort to persons who, if left to themselves, would never in such a matter have thought of departing from accepted usage. I have in mind an eminent publisher of this city, whom I consider it an honour to regard as a personal friend. He is a gentleman of great cultivation, of wide reading, of keen intelligence,

and of a very critical taste. This taste would surely have preserved him from the vagaries of the spelling reformer had not these been semi-officially sanctioned by the Philological Association. But now, and just because of that same sanction, he has all his business letters written in that particular brand of spelling. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe in his case how difficult it is for one to free himself from the restraints of his earlier and better days. Whenever he writes a letter in this sort of spelling he obviously feels a certain uneasy consciousness of guilt; for he prints on all his letter-heads a formal explanation that the spelling used is that which has received the approval of the American Philological Association. This is not brave of him; it evinces a timorous desire to escape from the consequences of his own errors and to shift them to the backs of others; and it also shows quite clearly how a good man loses all his nerve when once he has departed from the path of conscious rectitude. Many other persons give unconscious testimony to the same thing in one slight but very curious way. I refer to those who have been misled by Webster and the compilers of the Century

Dictionary into dropping the *u* that gives dignity and sonorousness to such words as "honour," "splendour," "valour," and the rest; yet who almost invariably, in writing the word "Saviour," spell it in the proper way. They probably never stop to think just why they do this; but the thing is really an instinctive recognition on their part that the dropping of the *u* entails a loss of dignity, and their sense of reverence unconsciously recoils from corrupting a name so sacred into "Savior."

Here and there and with considerable difficulty one may discover a stray victim of the teachings of spelling "reform" whose infatuation it is not easy to account for. Such, for instance, is my accomplished friend, Professor Brander Matthews, whose perfect taste would naturally make him one of the very last to be misled in such a way as this. He does not, indeed, go very far, adopting only such comparatively harmless freaks as "catalog," "program," and "specter," (and omitting the *u* in such words as those that I have mentioned just above.) I have often puzzled over the question as to why he goes even so far as this, and have constructed a little theory

of my own, which ascribes it to his inveterate Anglophobia. For I am quite sure that if the English were to adopt the Websterian spelling, Professor Matthews would very, very soon experience a conservative reaction. As it is, it always gives me in an editorial capacity a peculiar pleasure to secure one of his manuscripts, since then I personally go over all his proofs, fill in the silent letters, supply the omitted *u's* and metathesise the *er's*. I am fully aware that when he sees what I have done he has a most intense conviction that there are things which may strain even the truest friendship to the breaking point. But I, on my side, look at the proceeding in a very different way; for I feel that in revising his orthography I am conserving his reputation — that, in fact, I am saving him from himself. For to perceive a style like his, of so much grace and beauty and distinction, all marred and vulgarised by phonetic spelling, produces on the cultivated mind a shock like that which would be felt if one should get a sudden and unexpected glimpse of the Venus di Milo rigged out in calico bloomers.

It may be inferred from what has gone

before that I am slightly out of sympathy with a reformed spelling of the English language. Yet so mysterious are the dispensations of Providence that nothing in this world is really lost; and to this great and most impressive law even phonetic spelling offers no exception. At first, perhaps, one finds it rather difficult to see just how and why it ever was permitted to exist, and why its advocates should even temporarily be allowed to thrive and flourish like a green bay tree; but a little careful thought will solve the problem in a very satisfactory way. That the great classics of the language should ever be crippled and defiled by appearing in this grotesque cacography would be intolerable to every reader of fine feeling; yet there does exist a form of literature that finds a most appropriate setting here — a setting in fact so perfectly in keeping, so thoroughly in accordance with the eternal fitness of things, as to make a very strong appeal to one's instinctive sense of harmony. Those gentlemen, for instance, who write the glowing advertisements of Plymouth Rock Pants — would not their eulogies gain many an added charm if spelled phonetically? The cheapness of the

Pants, their reliability and moral worth — how should these things be properly set forth if not in such a form of spelling as the wearers of the Pants would probably prefer? And when we come upon a rhapsody beginning with the words "Chew Beeman's Gum," would not the gumminess of the gum be gummier if it were made to ooze into the mind through the medium of phonetic spelling? I really think so.

Now, if the proposed substitutes for the regular spelling of English words be no improvement in respect to real simplicity, consistency, uniformity, and convenience; and if, in addition, they are less true to the history of the language, if they do violence to well-established sentiment and custom, if they would introduce unlimited confusion, and if they are grotesque beyond belief, then why in the name of common sense should any one be anxious to adopt them? There is no use in talking and writing and publishing long arguments about analogies and derivations and phonetic bases and abnormal types and assimilative forms. One great colossal fact stands out so overwhelmingly as to dominate the whole interminable controversy. "Fo-

netik Refawrm" is hopelessly, unspeakably, and sickeningly vulgar; and this is an eternal reason why men and women of taste, refinement, and discrimination will reject it with a shudder of disgust.

The written forms of English words will change in time, as the language itself will change. It will change in its vocabulary, in its idioms, in its pronunciation, and perhaps to some extent in its structural form. For change is the one essential and inevitable phenomenon of a living language, as it is of any living organism. And with these changes, slow and silent and unconscious, will come a change in the orthography. But all these gradual modifications will be the work of new necessities, of new influences, of new conditions; and when they come they will come as a part of the history of English. While our native speech still thrives and flourishes, they will mark the progress of its grand development and growth; and when it sinks to its decline, they will trace the history of its decay. They will be like the changes in the later Latin, made quite unconsciously on the lips and pens of those who vainly strove for classical perfection, and whose very

errors are to-day so fruitful in the scientific study of Romance philology. But they will never to any extent be due to the whims of frantic faddists, nor will they ever be mechanically injected into universal usage at the whim of a little group of language-tinkers; for against these ludicrous attempts, true scholarship and right reason will interpose an adamantine barrier, and will successfully defend the dignity, the purity, and the permanence of our noble mother tongue.

NAMES

Names

NOT long ago a representative of one of the great London journals, in writing from Paris about the political agitation which had arisen in France over the case of Captain Dreyfus, expressed the opinion that the French army was practically ripe for a revolt which should overthrow the present government of the Republic and establish in its place a military dictatorship. The only check upon the accomplishment of such a purpose seemed to him to be the lack of a military chief sufficiently strong and sufficiently daring to command the confidence of the soldiers. He further stated that General Zurlinden, then the military governor of Paris, appeared to be the only leader who had shown himself capable of carrying out a *coup d'état;* for he had already defied the civil authority in dealing with the case of Colonel Picquart, and the office which he held gave him distinctly a coign of vantage. The cor-

respondent added, however, that General Zurlinden was practically ruled out because his name suggested German ancestry, and would therefore in itself make French soldiers hesitate to follow him in destroying the Republic.

This forms a sort of modern parallel to an incident narrated by one of the Roman historians, who tells us that in a certain crisis the legions shrank from accepting the command of a general whose name, Atrius Umber, was so strongly suggestive of the gloom and darkness of defeat. The two occurrences are, of course, not wholly identical in principle. The Roman soldiers were swayed by a superstitious belief in omens, the French soldiers by national and racial prejudice. Fundamentally, however, both episodes illustrate the importance of a name, and the way in which men's minds are consciously influenced by it. A name, indeed, is as much a factor in one's personality as any physical attribute — as much so, for example, as his height, the colour of his hair, the expression of his face, and the modulation of his voice. In forming an opinion of a person whom we meet, the name he bears is never wholly un-

important to us. In fact, even before we meet him we get a certain vague but real impression of him as soon as we have learned his name, and this impression is in nine cases out of ten to some extent justified by later observation and acquaintance, even though the justification be of a purely negative character. For instance, if we were told that a person bore the name of Bezaleel Scroggs, we should scarcely expect to find in him either a dreamy, æsthetic, imaginative, sensitive, and poetic type of individual, or, for that matter, an urbane, cultivated, and accomplished man of the world. We could not, perhaps, exactly formulate a positive conception of his personality, but we should be willing to wager a considerable sum of money that he would not represent either of the types that have just been specified. Even if he should turn out by some rare chance to be both impressive in his personal appearance, and exquisite in his mentality, we should still accept him with a certain hesitation, and should always, so to speak, exact a certain discount from his graces and accomplishments whenever we reverted to him in our thoughts.

Literary history is filled with apt and strik-

ing illustrations of the very real importance of a name. Both authors and publishers long ago accepted as a fact the value of a good title in attracting the notice of the public to a given book. This is why Mr. Thomas Hardy made three changes before putting forth *Jude the Obscure* under that particular title, which was, after all, extremely infelicitous. This also is why Dickens spent many hours in considering the name that should be given to each one of his novels, and why his published correspondence with Mr. Forster contains so much relating to this subject. Mrs. Craigie's best and most powerful novel, *The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham*, dragged for a while with the purchasing public, and even now few persons can remember the title with any accuracy, so clumsy is it and so unrelated in its parts. One of George Moore's most terrific pieces of realism has proved less popular and has been read less widely than some of his inferior works, because its hero, whose name is also the title of the book, was called Mike Fletcher — a name that jarred upon the susceptibilities of the average book-buyer. If the present writer may be pardoned for referring to himself, he

can draw upon his own experience for another illustration of the same thing from the publishers' point of view. He got together some time ago a collection of his miscellaneous verses and found a speculative publisher who was rash enough to accept them for appearance in book form. But when this publisher found that the title of the proposed volume was to be a Latin word, his rashness left him, and he frankly said that no book of verses with a Latin title would ever sell. He would publish the verses cheerfully, but he must insist upon the selection of some other title. Therefore, the verses remained unpublished for more than a year, because I was not able to evolve from my inner consciousness any other name than that which the practical wisdom of this particular Mæcenas foresaw would damn the volume hopelessly.

The names of characters in fiction are also factors, both in the success of any given book and in the permanency of the characters themselves, as types in the minds of all who read of them. In giving names to his personages, Dickens showed the same grotesqueness and also the same crude power that are displayed in his delineation of them. As he is a

caricaturist rather than an artist throughout all his work, so is he also a caricaturist and a lover of the grotesque in the names that stud his pages. Squeers and Pecksniff and Moddle and Hannibal Chollop are practically inconceivable as real names, just as Squeers and Pecksniff and Moddle and Hannibal Chollop are practically inconceivable as real persons. Yet for this very reason, the names are suited to the characters as Dickens has dashed them down upon his canvas in primitive colours and with broad, free strokes. The persons are not existent persons and the names are not existent names. Yet both names and persons typify certain elemental traits, and they live, therefore, in men's minds as literary symbols to denote certain obvious and definite attributes. There is something, indeed, in the very sound of the names themselves that harmonises with the individuals who bear them. A man named Squeers, for instance, could hardly fail to squint. He could hardly fail to be cruel and to infuse into his cruelty a certain vulgar jocularity that would make it thoroughly repulsive. Pecksniff, too, by virtue of his name, was necessarily a hypocrite and full of cant. Moddle

had to be lachrymose and weak. Hannibal Chollop was inevitably an American of the half-horse, half-alligator type. I suppose that if one were seriously to seek the ultimate reason why these names are so appropriate, it would be found in the fact that they contain a subtle half-suggestion of other words in our language which are associated with the traits embodied in the particular characters in question. In this respect they might be regarded as bearing out the theory of verbal impressionism contained in the verse of Mallarmé, and the French Symbolists in general, and they might be illustrated from that classic of childhood which in ballad form celebrates the slaying of the Jabberwock — a bit of verse which, while purely comic in its intention, may be studied very seriously, both by the philologist and the psychologist, as embodying in its word-formations some very profound and significant linguistic hints.

Thackeray, being a true artist in his character-drawing, was an artist also in his nomenclature. The persons in his books are absolutely true to life, and the names they bear impress one always as real names; yet even more than those which Dickens has

immortalised are they appropriate and perfectly harmonious in their relation to the characters who bear them. That a gouty peer should be Lord Colchicum, that a family which has just emerged from social obscurity into prominence should be styled the Newcomes, that a "ratting" baronet should bear the name of Crawley, that a cold-blooded go-between of icy speech should be known as Wenham (suggestive, of course, of Lake Wenham, whence London gets its ice supply), that a man of many duels should be entitled Captain Macmurdo, that a truculent critic, whose speciality is smashing authors, should figure as Mr. Bludyer, and that a great noble, tainted through and through with every sort of vileness and depravity, should be immortalised as the Marquis of Steyne, is as fitting as that a noted Oriental traveller should be called the Honourable Bedwin Sands, and that a dinner, attended by the Duchess of Stilton, should also show in its list of guests the names of the Marchioness of Cheshire and the Duc de la Gruyère. Anthony Trollope followed rather closely in the footsteps of his great contemporary, but rather overworked the formula, as, for instance, in

naming his poor curate in *The Warden* Mr. Quiverful; for, as Henry James has pointed out, we can conceive of a curate named Quiverful and of a curate with thirteen children; but when the curate who has the thirteen children is also named Quiverful, the coincidence is too remarkable for our credulity.

Of all the writers of fiction, however, it was Balzac who gave the most careful and incessant thought to the naming of his characters. With him the importance of a name amounted almost to a superstition. The names he chose were neither grotesque, like those in Dickens, nor obviously and immediately descriptive, like those in Thackeray; but they had, to Balzac's own mind at least, a sort of mystical appropriateness. They were all real names — names gathered by him with infinite pains from many sources, and then weighed anxiously in the balance. A curious and interesting account is given by one of his friends of how the great novelist once spent an entire day tramping about in the remotest quarters of Paris in search of a fitting name for a character just conceived by him. Every sign-board, every door-plate, every *affiché* upon the walls was scrutinised. Thousands of

names were considered and rejected, and it was only after his companion, utterly worn out by fatigue, had flatly refused to drag his weary limbs through more than one additional street, that Balzac suddenly saw upon a sign the name Marcas, and gave a shout of joy at having finally secured what he was seeking. Marcas it was, from that moment; and Balzac gradually evolved a Christian name for him, first considering what initial was most appropriate; and then, having decided upon Z, went on to expand this into Zépherin, explaining minutely just why the whole name, Zépherin Marcas, was the only possible one for the character in the novel. When we remember how at this time Balzac was labouring at his desk for nearly eighteen hours out of every twenty-four, and how precious was every moment of his time, the incident which I have just detailed gives striking evidence of the value which he set upon the fitness of a name.

The bestowal of names upon their characters by less important novel writers need hardly be considered here, yet there is scarcely any doubt that the popularity of English

noblemen as stock subjects in fiction is very greatly enhanced by the sonorous titles which they bear — titles the very sound of which suggests everything that is aristocratic and patrician and that sort of thing. Strathmore and Chandos and Bertie Cecil would never have appealed with so much power to the Ouida-reading public had their names been more plebeian; and a sprinkling of fine old Norman and Saxon place-names is always *a priori* as attractive to the average novel reader as it is to the owners of apartment houses and hotels, who probably resort to works like these in looking up attractive titles for their buildings. On the other hand, Mrs. Craigie lately weakened her readers' liking for a heroine by inflicting upon her the name of Bridget, though she disguises this in the first few chapters by using the French form, Brigitte; and Victor Hugo in his ignorance of English made a portion of his novel *L'Homme Qui Rit* absurd by gravely giving the family name of a British peer as "Tom Jimjack." Regarding this curious freak of nomenclature, a well-known Englishman once had an amusing interview with Victor Hugo; but, to employ Mr. Kipling's now classic

phrase, this is another story and has no relevance to our discussion.

The names of which authors are themselves possessed deserve a no less serious mention. A striking and unusual name is fully as important to a writer as are the titles of his books. It marks him out at once as separated from the general run of literary men, and gives a certain real distinction to even a comparatively small success. You do not have to stop and carefully explain in the case of Rudyard Kipling, for example, that you mean the particular Kipling who is the creator of Mulvaney; for not only is there no other Rudyard Kipling, but there is practically no other Kipling of any kind, and there never has been; and even before this uniquely named genius won a world-wide reputation, he was perfectly secure of whatever credit the English-speaking public might be willing to bestow upon his book. Mr. Kipling himself must have been conscious of the importance of his name as the world now knows it; for having been christened Joseph Rudyard Kipling, he wisely suppressed the Joseph, and escaped the misfortune of having his earlier works appear handicapped by any such sug-

gestion of the commonplace as would have been inevitable had he inscribed the title-page with "Joseph R. Kipling." The same thing is true of Dickens and of Thackeray; for their names are by no means usual ones, and even in the beginning there was no confusion in the mind of any one such as might have arisen at first had their names been Brown and Jones. Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Longfellow are instances of writers whose eminence is emphasised at least and made especially distinctive by their unusual names. Conversely, a cacophonous name, or one that calls up incongruous or ludicrous associations, must prove an impediment if not an insurmountable barrier to fame. The Ettrick Shepherd would surely hold a higher rank in the minds of men, and would have won a wider and more flattering recognition, had it not been his misfortune to bear the name of Hogg.

This subject of names, however, if we pursue it further, takes us beyond the domain of literary history and into the sphere of associational psychology, if not to the very verge of mysticism. Is it not true that there does exist in general a certain harmony between every name and the person who is named?

Putting aside for the moment any attempt to explain this fact, if it be a fact, let us consider whether most names do not, to the mind of almost everyone, connote certain general traits of character, or at least certain general indications of temperament. For example, among men's names, does not the name of John call up in the mind of everyone a rather steady-going, practical, usual sort of man without much imagination, but with plenty of common sense? Is not the name Francis indicative of mental and physical traits which are precisely the reverse of John's? Edward and George are rather more uncertain. As a rule they bring to mind natures less prosaic than that of which John is possessed, though less extreme than that which is connoted by either Francis or Alfred or Herbert. Some nice distinctions may be drawn between names that are, in sound, not very different from each other. For instance, Edward suggests a manly, straightforward nature, a not very analytical mind, but good sense and good feeling. Edmund is more finical, more fussy, and rather selfish. Edwin means weakness bordering on mawkishness. There is much more character, however, in the Christian

names of women than in the Christian names of men, possibly because there is a much greater variety in them and because more thought is given in bestowing them. Hence it is possible to discriminate more carefully in ascribing traits and attributes to the possessor of any particular feminine name. Emma, for example, is the feminine parallel to John. It suggests a personality that is not particularly individual, that is rather tame and rather limited, but one that is as a rule amiable and kindly. Alice contains a hint of domesticity; Helen of reserve, of dignity, and of a certain patrician grace; Amy, of friendliness, pertness, and good humour, with perhaps a touch of the flirtatious; Ida, of underlying seriousness, without much depth; Ruth, of sweetness, patience, and purity; Ada, of jollity which oversteps the bounds of dignity; Laura, of sentiment and intensity, coupled with more or less caprice and fickleness; Esther of self-control and clearness of thought.

It will be noted that the names here mentioned are names which are not usually twisted into diminutives; for this question of diminutives has a special importance of its own.

Many names are given to a child at its christening which if unchanged would be by no means congruous with the character and disposition of its possessor; and when this happens to be the case, by a sort of unconscious psychological process, by-forms are almost always substituted among friends and acquaintances. Thus, if a boy named John turns out not to be a John of the type described above, his friends will be very certain to speak of him as Jack; and much the same distinction is to be drawn between Thomas and Tom. If the name Lily happens to be given to a baby who afterwards grows up into a rather stout brunette, it is safe to say that her intimates will style her Lil. Some names have several by-forms, and then the particular one which is chosen becomes immensely significant. For instance, the name William is rather a neutral name with a hint in it of primness and precision. Suppose, however, that a particular William happens to be rather bluff and boisterous and hearty; then he is very certain to be known as Bill, while if, on the other hand, the primness and precision in him are stressed and made unduly prominent, then he will be known as Willie;

and if the name Willie clings to him after he has become a man, one may be very sure that he is a very weak and watery sort of person. In women's names the same thing is continually seen. Margaret, in itself and unchanged, means dignity, character, and a strong regard for the proprieties; but Madge implies that a particular Margaret has turned out to be rather harum-scarum, lively, and mischievous, while Maggie suggests only what is very plain and obvious. The name Mary, because of its religious associations, has been so universally bestowed that in itself it has no particular associations, being given to princess and peasant girl alike. It is a beautiful name, yet from it and for the reason mentioned, no deductions can be drawn. Abbreviated, however, into May, it brings to mind a rather simple nature, yet one that is perhaps a little sensuous. Under the form Marie, it tells of a certain archness and love of fun, of something bright and dainty and piquant. Disguised as Mamie, it verges upon the common, or at any rate, upon the distinctly commonplace. Elizabeth, unchanged, connotes about the same qualities as does Margaret. When converted into Betty, it means pertness

and perversity; shortened into Beth it means softness, timidity, and a certain lack of character. As Bessie, it tells of kindliness, constancy, strong affection, and all the qualities that brighten and beautify a home. As Lizzie it descends a step or two in the direction of Mamie; as Eliza, it becomes uninteresting. There are certain names which have been so unfortunate as to become widely popular, and therefore to be given indiscriminately by mothers who have read many novels. Such names, for example, are Edith, and Maud, and Ethel, and Gertrude. These are beautiful names, and they had at one time a meaning; but now they are so often met with as to have lost their distinctive character, and no deductions can be safely drawn from them at all.

The theory may be advanced by some that in many cases our feeling about a name and our conception of the qualities which in the abstract are connected with it in our minds, are due to an association of the name with some character of whom we have read or whom we have ourselves actually known in life. Thus, if the name Becky connotes hardness, insincerity, and something a little raffish, is it

not because Thackeray's Becky has made it impossible for us to rid ourselves of the impression which she left upon our memories? If we say that Beth suggests timidity and gentleness, is not Miss Alcott responsible for this? And if, in life, we have met, for example, a fascinating Beatrice, or a commonplace Martha, or a mischievous and jovial Archie, do we not ever after, unconsciously perhaps, associate fascination with every Beatrice, and commonplaceness with every Martha, and mischief and joviality with every Archie? This seems at first sight rather plausible, yet that it is not true is easily demonstrated by referring to our impressions with regard to very usual names. We meet many Johns and Georges and Maggies and Lizzies, and if there were no serious basis for my original claim, these persons would all be so different from one another as to prevent us from forming any abstract conception of the qualities implied in each of these names. But in fact, the very contrary of this is true. We all do have a typical John in mind and a typical Maggie; and on comparing notes I think that these types will be found to be substantially identical with everyone. And hence,

it is likely that we do not think of a Becky in a certain way just because Thackeray drew for the world the Becky of *Vanity Fair* and made her immortal and unforgettable; but rather is it to be held that Thackeray called his heroine Becky because to his mind *a priori* the name was absolutely fitted to the character.

But some may say, with a rather sceptical smile, "Why is it that any name should be associated particularly with any special trait or traits, or why should it call up one type of individual rather than another?" And they will perhaps remind you of the case of the old Greek sophist who called his slaves after various conjunctions and prepositions in order to show that there is nothing in mere names. It is not really necessary, however, to assume that there is only an occult basis underlying the appropriateness of individual names. Colonel John Hay, I believe, somewhere observes that when you are told of a certain man that he is named Andrew Jackson, you can get a pretty clear idea of the sort of people who named him, and therefore of the sort of environment in which his early years, at least, were passed. The thought which

inspired this very true remark can be extended and made to have a wider application. Most names indicate to some extent the domestic surroundings, the degree of cultivation, and the æsthetic development of the family to which an individual belongs. For this reason, and for this reason chiefly, names are psychologically significant. When we get out of the sphere of usual names their significance is much enhanced. On the one hand, peculiar names of a particular class afford infallible indicia that point in a particular direction. Old Testament names like Jonadab and Abijah and Abednego can have been given only by a particular class of persons, and their possessors must necessarily represent in their training the sort of surroundings which these persons obviously had. On the other hand, exceptional and romantic names, like Esmé, and Zaidée, and Gwendolen, and Hermione, denote with equal certainty the fact that those who gave them belong to still another and very much contrasted class. Considering these things, therefore, and noting also the significance of by-names which are in reality unconsciously descriptive of developed traits, one can discover a rational basis for the theory

that there exists a certain harmony between names and the individuals who bear them. How far this theory can be applied, and how much of an element of occultism also lurks within it, must be left to the reflective mind of the reader who has had the patience to follow me thus far.

FIFTY BOOKS

Fifty Books

OF all conventional literary humbugs — and there is certainly no lack of them — the Best Book List is probably the most utterly absurd. Whenever a magazine or a newspaper or a literary journal finds itself reduced to a state of extreme inanity, the editor always falls back on the Best Book List as a safe and certain way of reviving his readers' languishing interest. A number of eminent or influential or notorious persons are requested to send in for publication their choice of the fifty or seventy-five or one hundred books which they regard as being the very best in all literature. Sometimes, to give the thing a greater picturesqueness, it is asked of them: "If you were sentenced to imprisonment for life, and could take with you to your dungeon only one hundred books, what ones would you select?" or, "If you were shipwrecked on a desert island, what fifty books would you most long for in your exile?"

Now, it is probable that if these persons were really shipwrecked on a desert isle, they would not devote very many hours to yearning soulfully after literature, but that they would put in most of their time at digging clams or otherwise trying to get something to eat. But never mind that. When they read the editor's question, they are always hugely flattered, and sit down at once to compose a list of books which shall impress the reader's mind with a proper sense of awe at their scholarly range, their wide reading, their enlightened taste, and their general tremendousness. And so every list of the kind that I have ever seen is the sort of list that its author would never in reality by any chance desire to read in prison or in the intervals of digging clams, but it is rather one constructed chiefly for effect.

They pretty nearly always start out with the Bible, which is very well, because the Bible is probably the one book which under such circumstances they really would look into; but after that, they put down Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. They might read Shakespeare, but it is not likely that they know anything in particular about

Dante, except that he was once illustrated by Doré. And fancy any one really wanting to read the whole of *Paradise Lost!* It is safe to say that outside of professional students and teachers of English literature, there are not fifty persons in the United States or England who have ever read the whole of *Paradise Lost*. And small blame to them. For *Paradise Lost*, like a majority of the long poems which the world possesses, is a work of fine single passages set amid a dreary waste of decasyllabic balderdash. It is, indeed, next to impossible for any poet to be inspiring and magnificent throughout ten thousand lines. Putting Homer and Tennyson aside, there are no others that one can readily recall; and certainly Milton is not of the number, with his insufferable pedantry, and his scenes where angels drop in to take a light but wholesome supper with Adam and Eve, and then spend all the evening splitting hairs over the doctrines of Predestination and Moral Responsibility.

Then they are pretty certain to put down *Don Quixote*, because they have been told that this is one of the great books of the world. And so it is, if you skip two-thirds of it and read the rest in the original Spanish.

But if you don't, it is one of the most boresome productions in extant literature. The statement made in a recent number of a well-known literary magazine to the effect that *Don Quixote* is the one great indispensable book for a boy to read, would make a cat laugh, even though it were a very serious-minded and thoughtful cat. Then they add *Tom Jones*, because they have heard that Thackeray admired it; but they are not themselves aware (which is strictly true) that it is simply a crude, ill-constructed hash of preposterous vulgarities with no character-drawing and only a feeble interest. If they wish to give a classical flavour to their list, they set down Pope's or Bryant's version of the *Iliad*, and probably never know what a pathetic spectacle they are making of themselves in the eyes of all enlightened persons.

And so it goes,— book after book included simply because someone has said that this, that, and the other is a "classic," until the completed list is no more indicative of an individual's personal tastes than it is in reality an authoritative selection of good and profitable reading. What these persons actually would prefer to read is never indicated by

their pretentious anthology of cut-and-dried opinions. They never can define and analyse and explain the striking and peculiar merit of any book, but they can always tell you what someone else has said about it. They do not remember, or else they do not know, that the creative faculty is entirely distinct from the critical faculty, and that the two are even, in a way, antagonistic. They forget that a man may himself have done exceedingly good work and yet be the poorest judge in the world of the work of others; just as Lord Byron regarded Pope as the greatest of the English poets, and just as Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who is one of the strongest and most original dramatists of the present day, considers Shakespeare to have been a pygmy in intellect and a Philistine in style.

The fact is that no one should be permitted to prepare a list like this, a list which professes to set forth the "best" books, without being at once required by previous agreement to pass a rigid examination on his selections, so as to let the public see just how much knowledge of his "masterpieces" he possesses, and just how much honesty and candour his professed opinions really represent.

In the first place it is absurd for anyone to make up such a list and define it as a list of the fifty "best" books; for the best books of the world number far more than fifty. In the second place, it is impossible to describe a book in one department of literature as essentially "better" than some other book representing quite a different line of work and thought. Thus, who could say whether or not Vergil's *Æneid* is "better" than Darwin's *Descent of Man?* One cannot reduce the two, so to speak, to a common denominator in order to compare them. They have no points in common, except that both are the work of master minds. Then, too, the personal taste of the reader comes in as an element of the choice. An individual interested in art, for instance, if obliged to restrict his selection of books to fifty, will naturally include some art works in the list, and will sacrifice for them, say, several books on history; just as the man of historical tastes will keep the histories and reject the art.

Therefore, in making, as I am going to do, a list of fifty books, it is to be understood as representing simply the personal preferences of an individual; and in so making it I have

set before myself the question which I have just mentioned as one which is sometimes propounded to the list-maker, and which embodies what may be called the Desert Island Hypothesis. Suppose, for example, that I were cast ashore upon an island with no hope of rescue, but with the prospect of spending the rest of my days there. And suppose this island to be, not the sort of island on which I should have to spend my time in digging clams or in otherwise scratching around for the means of subsistence, but the sort of island on which the Swiss Family Robinson would probably have been wrecked. It would never rain there; but, as in Paradise before the Fall, a mist would come up at night and water the face of the earth, so that I should not have to labour and to break my finger nails in constructing a hut for shelter. All the choicest products of the animal and vegetable kingdom would be within easy call. The goats would come up to be milked at eventide. The birds would obligingly lay their eggs in hot springs so that they would be found ready boiled for use. Salt wells would abound, and also natural vinegar, while some kind of a nut would provide the

oil necessary to complete the materials for salad dressing. The tobacco plant would flourish there, and would spontaneously curl up into very good plantation-made cigars; while in the recesses of the rocks a bubbling spring would sparkle, perhaps, with excellent Château Yquem.

Under these circumstances I should have plenty of leisure; and when a convenient ship happened, as in *Robinson Crusoe*, to be wrecked in the neighbourhood of my island, I should hope that of the packing-cases which would presently, of course, come floating to the land, at least one might happen to contain some well-assorted reading-matter. And suppose that all this took place, and that the literary packing-case could hold but fifty books, what fifty books would I most wish for, remembering that these would have to be my entire library for the remainder of my life?

Well, in the first place, I should n't be concerned with the problem whether or not those books were in reality the "best" or not, or whether this, that, or the other professional critic had approved of them; or whether they had appeared in a lot of lists made up by

wiseacres for the edification of the general public. I should just think of the books that I actually wanted to *read*. So this is about the sort of collection that I should hope to find in the brine-encrusted packing-box.

First of all, I should hope to find a Bible, because, putting aside all religious considerations, there is no book so wonderfully written, so full of splendid imagery, of stately poetry, of terse, swift narrative, and of lines that soothe and comfort and console. This stands by itself. Then, in poetry, I should wish for Homer's *Odyssey* — that marvellous story, or rather chain of stories, redolent of a primitive age, and full of life and colour and imagination; and if I had to have it in a translation I should hope for the version in English prose by Professor Butcher and Mr. Andrew Lang, as preserving better than any other the strength, directness, and simplicity of the original. Horace, the most human of all the poets, ancient or modern, would come next, and then Shakespeare and Tennyson, — the first the greatest dramatist, and the second the greatest singer that our language owns. Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* is an individual preference by way of contrast to the other

works of poetry named. Its strangeness and subtlety, the charm of its music, and its very perversity, make it a sort of *sauce piquante* to the more solid fare of the preceding books. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* deserves a place because it is so elemental, so natural, and so American in its superb defiance of convention and formality.

A person on a desert island would need to exercise a considerable amount of philosophy, and he ought therefore to have some good works at hand to recall to his mind the musings of other leading minds. Schwegler's *History* is not a great book, but it is convenient and compact, and so I should myself wish to have it. Lucretius, apart from the splendour of his poetry, is valuable as an expositor of that system of philosophy which, in its various ramifications, has had most influence in modern times; and Lange's *History of Materialism* rounds out the same phase of thought. Schopenhauer is a personal preference. Lecky's *History of European Morals* is the most clearly written and valuable ethical history ever published; and its footnotes are packed full of curious and out-of-the-way information. For the

practical philosophy of human life and the study of human nature, no two books contain more shrewd, unerring observation than Bacon's *Essays* and the famous *Maximes* of La Rochefoucauld.

One who is shut away from the world would naturally enjoy the history of the countries which he is never more to see; and the narratives themselves are also interesting and inspiring as literature. The history of Greece by Grote and those of Rome, earlier and later, by Mommsen and by Gibbon give a picture of the two ancient civilisations that have most influenced our own; and the books are, besides, great monuments of human industry and research. The study by Symonds of the Renaissance period shows the immediate sources of modern culture in its first evolution; while Lewis's *History of Germany*, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and Sloane's *Napoleon* will give a clue to what is most important in Continental history. Naturally the story of our own race would most interest a solitary American reader; and the works of John Richard Green and McCarthy afford at once a clear conspectus of the most interesting facts of English history, and much

fascinating narrative; while Macaulay's volumes may be thrown in, partly as history and partly as affording some striking and brilliant character-drawing of individual men. In American history, MacMaster's work, with all its imperfections, is a treasury of valuable knowledge, and Woodrow Wilson's *Division and Reunion*, with Hay and Nicolay's *Lincoln*, sufficiently describe the most tremendous period of our national development.

In literary history, Christ's *Griechische Litteraturgeschichte* and Mackail's exquisitely written *Latin Literature* deserve a place, while Brunetière's recently published work, combining history and criticism, Taine's vivid and suggestive book, and Matthew Arnold's *Essays* would serve for the two modern literatures that most interest one.

Fiction presents a difficult problem, and here the personal equation will most conspicuously appear. I should myself desire Scott's *Ivanhoe* and his *Guy Mannering* as being the most stirring two books that our language contains, and the ones which, with Thackeray's *Pendennis*, can stand the most rereading. Of the works of Dickens my personal choice would select *David Copperfield*

and *Martin Chuzzlewit* as containing his best and most enduring work, and with these would stand Trollope's *Barchester Towers*, a masterpiece of native English realism uncoloured and untainted by French influence. In French fiction, Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* each represent almost an epoch, while Zola's *Assommoir* and his great prose war epic, *La Débâcle*, best illustrate his gigantic powers. Maupassant's *Bel Ami*, the most terrible study of social depravity that one can find, comes next, with Daudet's *Sapho*, which epitomises in one unforgettable tragedy the influence of woman upon man. The greatest four works of fiction ever written by persons of American nativity are Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Henry James's *The American*, and Mr. Howells's *Modern Instance*, so that these may next be added. Finally, the list may end with George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*, which is neither fiction, autobiography, criticism, nor philosophy, but which is curiously compounded of all these, and whose strange, brilliant, stimulating, and disquieting thought repels, attracts, and fas-

cinates to a degree that is absolutely unique in literature.

Such is the list—not of the "best" books, but of the books that I should wish to have if they were to last me all my life. The most obvious criticism which it inspires, is that it has something of a Philistine flavour in it; but never mind. There are many other books that for the moment would appeal to me far more than some of these; but in the long run those that I have chosen would outlast the others, and their interest would never be entirely outworn. I summarise the list:—

1. The Bible.
2. Homer's Odyssey.
3. Horace.
4. Shakespeare.
5. Tennyson.
6. Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal.
7. Whitman's Leaves of Grass.
8. Schwegler's History of Philosophy.
9. Lucretius.
10. Lange's History of Materialism.
11. Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Idea.
12. Lecky's History of European Morals.

13. Bacon's Essays.
14. La Rochefoucauld's Maximes.
15. Grote's History of Greece.
16. Mommsen's History of Rome.
17. Gibbon's Decline and Fall.
18. Symonds's Renaissance in Italy.
19. Lewis's History of Germany.
20. Carlyle's French Revolution.
21. Sloane's Napoleon.
22. Macaulay's History of England.
23. Green's History of the English People.
24. McCarthy's History of Our Own Times.
25. MacMaster's History of the People of the United States.
26. Wilson's Division and Reunion
27. Hay and Nicolay's Lincoln.
28. Christ's Greek Literature.
29. Mackail's Latin Literature.
30. Brunetière's French Literature.
31. Taine's English Literature.
32. Matthew Arnold's Essays in Criticism.
33. Scott's Ivanhoe.
34. Scott's Guy Mannering.
35. Thackeray's Pendennis.
36. Balzac's Père Goriot.
37. Flaubert's Madame Bovary.
38. Trollope's Barchester Towers.
39. Dickens's David Copperfield.
40. Dickens's Martin Chuzzlewit.

41. Gautier's Mlle. de Maupin.
42. Zola's Assommoir.
43. Zola's Débâcle.
44. Maupassant's Bel Ami.
45. Daudet's Sapho.
46. Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter.
47. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin.
48. James's The American.
49. Howells's A Modern Instance.
50. George Moore's Confessions of a Young Man.

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

Stéphane Mallarmé

THE English tongue possesses one great advantage over every other modern language spoken in the Occident, by reason of the very sharp line which it draws between the vocabulary of its poetry and the vocabulary of its prose. In nothing else is its richness so instantly and impressively apparent. There are thousands of words which are perfectly familiar to the unlettered reader, and with whose meaning he is thoroughly conversant, yet which are words that he would never by any chance employ in conversation. They are essentially poetical words, words that are reserved for the diction of those who express their ideas through the medium of verse rather than through the medium of ordinary speech. Many of them, indeed, would scarcely be employed even in the most stately and rhetorical prose, so completely do they fall to the possession of the poets. Take, for instance, the word "sword." This is the name for the

weapon, which one would be likely to find employed in ordinary prose. When prose becomes highly wrought or oratorical, we may look for "blade" or "steel;" but only in impassioned poetry would "glaive" or "falchion" ever seem appropriate. This means, of course, that English possesses an extraordinary wealth of synonyms, and not only that, but it means also that these synonyms have by tradition been classified into definite groups, one of which belongs to poetry, another of which belongs to formal prose, to our *estilo culto*, so to speak, while the third is utilised in the easy colloquial intercourse of ordinary life.

An interesting illustration of this truth is to be found in the orations delivered in English by the Hungarian patriot, Kossuth. Kossuth had acquired our language, or, at any rate, the greater part of his English vocabulary, while in prison; and his access to books being very limited, he had read and re-read and saturated his mind with the words and phrases and idioms of Shakespeare. Consequently, when he regained his freedom and had occasion to address great audiences in England and in this country, he spoke with the greatest

fluency and ease; but the English that he used was the sort of English that no one who had been born to a knowledge of the language would ever have dreamed of employing in any kind of prose whatever. It was stately, it was picturesque, it was magnificent; it produced an indescribable impression upon his hearers; but it was such English as none of us will probably ever hear from the lips of an Anglo-Saxon orator; for it was not prose at all, save in the order of its words. It was essentially poetry, because its phrases were all drawn from the pages of the greatest poet who ever wrote our language.

Now, had Kossuth learned French from the pages of Racine or of Corneille, and had he addressed an audience in French, there would have been very little to differentiate his diction from the diction of a man who had acquired the language from the reading of good French prose; for the French, unlike the English, has not that extraordinary range of expression and that lavish wealth of words which give to English three distinct and different forms of speech.

This indicates a radical and inevitable limitation that charaterises the poetry of France.

Poetical effects in French must be sought in other ways than through the use of words which, in themselves, give to the lines where they appear a true distinction and a true poetical colouring. French poetry, therefore, is necessarily now, as it has always been, more artificial, more self-conscious, so to speak, than English verse. By writers of the Classical School the object sought to be attained was smoothness, precision, lucidity, and grace, and this end was, in fact, secured to a wonderful degree. But classicism and the severities of its rules in the end partook of that tameness and lack of spontaneity which are impressed upon the English mind in reading continuously the poetical productions, for instance, of Addison and Pope. There is too much regularity, too much smoothness, even too much lucidity; and one longs to break away from what is in the end seen and felt to be the result of precept quite as much as of inspiration. Consequently, in France with the rise of the Romantic School, there was witnessed a reaction whose first stage is to be noted in the finest work of Victor Hugo. Hugo, of course, was a great genius, a marvellous master of language, instinct with imagination, and

having something of the lawlessness and the contempt for mere tradition which the highest genius always shows. For the strictness of classical precedent he cared comparatively little; yet he did not violate it in such a way as to shock the ear which had been trained to admire the neat couplets of his predecessors. His rhythms were often abrupt, but never broken; and he produced new sensations and new metrical effects less by destroying existing rules than by giving to his lines a certain sonorous splendour which came from the richness of his metaphors and the fulness of his rhymes.

Many who lacked his supreme genius followed in his steps, but with that devotion to pure formula which is so characteristic of the French mind. They simply constructed on the basis of Hugo's poetry a new system which was quite as artificial as the old, although possessing for a time the charm of novelty. Hugo's irregularities were simply made regular. His children born out of strict classical wedlock were legitimised; and the result was finally the acceptance of a somewhat different set of rules and regulations, the aim of which was to conquer difficulties rather than to give

full play to inspiration. This was the school of the "Parnasse," and it was a school of patient labour and preternatural ingenuity of construction.

Against this, also, in time there was bound to come a definite reaction; and this reaction finds its truest representatives in two French poets, who have lately died — in Paul Verlaine and in Stéphane Mallarmé. Of the two the second is the more important, because in him is best detected the definite evolution of a new theory of French verse. To Mallarmé, poetry was first of all not a vehicle for conveying a definitely elaborated thought. Mere lucidity meant nothing. One hates to use the word now that it has become so hackneyed, yet in describing him it is absolutely necessary to say that he was a poetical impressionist. Two things stand out most vividly in his verse, and these are, first of all, melody, and second, intense emotion. To seek in him for what is ordinarily known as clearness of expression is nothing but a waste of time. He appeals to the senses rather than to the intellect; he charms the ear with a hundred harmonies, with the most exquisite cadences, with rhythmical movements that

linger in the memory and haunt it and ravish it; and he calls up a host of undefined, delicious half-sensations that one may be incapable of understanding or of analysing, and yet that for this very reason are often all the more delightful. A typical poem of Mallarmé, for instance, is like an exquisite piece of music sung by a voice of superhuman sweetness, yet one whose words as words are scarcely understood, and are, indeed, unnecessary to the enjoyment of the hearer. And so Mallarmé sings, and as we listen we are troubled by the stirrings of emotion and fascinated by the strange melody of his lines, and our thoughts go out in the direction that he wishes, even though in the end we receive impressions rather than ideas. He affects us at times with an indescribable languor such as comes to one from the suggestion of a rare perfume, a lingering puff of incense, or the plashing of a distant waterfall; and we yield ourselves to this strange charm without question and without cavil. Precisely what he means is of little consequence. He is a true poet. He makes us feel, he makes us enjoy; and we ask no more.

It is more profitable to consider Mallarmé

rather than those other poets who profess to be his followers, and who have done so much to make him thoroughly misunderstood. In the English-speaking world, at least, there seems to have prevailed of late a general notion that Mallarmé was guilty both in his life and in his work of all the eccentricities and irregularities of the poetical school that called him master. He was one of the first French writers to be styled *décadent*, and this title he accepted; but in his case decadence is in no wise to be regarded as degeneracy. The wild riot of poetical construction that can be found in Paul Verlaine and Gustave Kahn is as absent from the verse of Mallarmé as the debaucheries of the modern Villon were absent from his life. The vagaries of the Symbolists, who found a subtle connection between colour and sound, and who regarded every vowel as having a colour of its own, debating whether the vowel "I" is really red or blue, cannot be traced to Mallarmé, but take their origin in the writings of Arthur Rimbaud and of René Ghil.

Mallarmé, indeed, was in no respect eccentric. A simple little man, sprung from middle-class provincial stock, he lived a sober

life; and after spending some years in England, where he acquired the language, he returned to Paris and passed his later years as a professor in the Lycée Fontanes. He worked hard, he wrote carefully, he had a very un-French sense of humour, his conversation was delightful; and beyond this there is very little to be said of him as a man.

One slight correction of an error which, in this country at any rate, is very common, should be made just here. Nowhere in his verse does Mallarmé infringe upon the established laws of the conventional French prosody. He took no liberties with long-standing rules. In him there are absolutely no *vers libres*. This fact is mentioned very carefully by Mr. Edmund Gosse in a paper published in the *Saturday Review*, yet a reading of the paper seems to show that Mr. Gosse, in practice, has scarcely grasped the universality of this truth. He states that in a copy of *Les Fenêtres* possessed by him, the following line occurs:

Que dore la main chaste de l'Infini.

This line was altered by Mallarmé himself to read:

Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini.

Upon this fact Mr. Gosse makes the following comment: "Whether the Infinite had a Hand or a Morning was purely a question of euphony." Now, in this Mr. Gosse is surely wrong, and were it the case of a less accomplished writer, one might say that he is singularly obtuse; for the change made here is not a change made merely for the sake of securing a certain collocation of vowels, nor does it show, as Mr. Gosse appears to think, that Mallarmé "treated words as musical notation" rather than with reference to their meaning and logical sequence; but it merely indicates that like any other poet he altered his lines to make them conform to ordinary rhythmical requirements; for in this case the line limps unless the dissyllable *matin* be substituted for the monosyllable *main*. In other words, this alteration was simply a proof of the statement already made by Mr. Gosse to the effect that in Mallarmé there are no *vers libres*.

The influence of Mallarmé has been very great, and it still continues to be felt. Even those who pushed his theories too far have done much to give spontaneity and beauty and originality to a national poetry that was

becoming rather flat and tame. His followers have often been eccentric; they have introduced into French verse an element that from one point of view is irrational and demoralising; yet when all has been said they have at least defied the limitations of the language, and have infused into its poetry the thrill of acute emotion, the naturalness of unpremeditated harmony, and a certain sweetness, and at times a certain glow and fire such as it never knew before.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Honoré de Balzac

IN the literature of each creative Western people there stands out to the mind some single name as one which more than any other is distinctive, overshadowing, supreme. Such absolute preëminence, for example, is given in Italian literature to Dante, in Spanish literature to Cervantes, in German literature to Goethe, and in English literature to Shakespeare; while in the literature of France, a serious consideration of the real magnitude and meaning of his work must finally assign the same unchallenged domination to Honoré de Balzac.

It is not merely that these names respectively recall the highest record of achievement in the literatures whose annals they adorn. They stand for something more. Each one is reminiscent also of a people's intellectual and artistic attributes, of its temperament, of its modes of thought and feeling, of the hidden springs of its national inspiration, and of

the distinctively peculiar qualities that characterise its imagination, its passion, and its creative genius. Those superficial writers of our day whose whole intellectual equipment is a stock of current catchwords, have made too much of what they call the close relationship of literature to life; for they profess to find such a relationship existing everywhere, and to detect in even the casual and ephemeral productions of any age a true reflection of its eternal meaning; whereas the trivial is never characteristic or informing, since the trivial alone remains the same from age to age; and the inanities of a Gellius in one century and the twaddle of a Tupper in another tell us no more about the evolution of human thought than the *graffiti* in a Pompeian cook-shop and the school-boy scrawls upon a modern board-fence tell us about the evolution of human art. It is the hand and brain of genius alone that can seize and fix forever upon the printed page something of the essential life and feeling of a given century; and if the genius be transcendent, it will go even deeper down than this and distil into its recorded thought something that profoundly underlies the life of all the cen-

turies and that is vitally inherent in the race, the people, and the nation, both then and for all time.

Not merely, therefore, is Dante to be styled the greatest Italian poet; he is a mirror also of the true Italian mind, of an imagination that is rooted in the past, and of an emotional nature that is affected by a half-mystical superstition which peeps and pries into the other world. Not merely, again, is Cervantes a great humourist, a great romancer. He reflects the Spanish character even while he satirises all its weaknesses, its superstition, its devotion to impossible ideals, its exaggerated punctilio, its Moorish orientalism, its love of grandeur and magnificence, its curious blindness to the actualities of life. In Goethe, closely blended with the German ideality and sentimentalism are the German pedantry and ponderousness. In Shakespeare there are seen most vividly the Anglo-Saxon strength, with here and there a touch of Anglo-Saxon crudity, the bold defiance of mere form, the swift directness and efficiency, the mellow humour, the overweening imagination, and finally, the subliminal solemnity of purpose, and the real loftiness and majesty of that im-

perious people from whose loins have sprung the masters of the modern world.

In no degree less typical of what is truly best and most profoundly national in the genius of the French, is the work — and for the matter of that, the life as well — of the extraordinary man the hundredth anniversary of whose birth occurred not very long ago. Honoré de Balzac represents, as none of his most famous countrymen has represented, a larger France than the mere France of Paris. He stands for the greater and more virile France of history and of fact. For in spite of the oft-quoted proverb, Paris is in no sense really France. That glittering, feverish, meretricious Phryne among cities is less the capital of a nation than it is the capital of triumphant Pleasure, the Mecca of those from every land who offer daily sacrifice to Sense. It may be the artistic and literary brain of France; it may be the political barometer of France; it may, again, conceal beneath its Coan draperies the festering sore that is slowly sapping the vitality of the race; yet even to-day when it draws swiftly to itself in some mysteriously potent way the best of what the provinces can yield of blood and brain, it is not France.

Paris to France is rather what some strangely fascinating mistress is to the man who throws into her lap whatever he possesses, who waits on her caprices, and coins his heart's blood for her casual delight; but who within his very heart of hearts revolts from her dominion, and who even in their moments of surpassing tenderness is conscious within himself of a slumbering resentment at the recollection of her frequent insolence and hardness and disdain.

Hence it comes that many writers might be named who are supremely typical of Paris, or who even radiate a marvellous reflection of partial phases of the Gallic character that are more than local and Parisian. In Molière, for instance, there are exhibited all the wit, the intellectual quickness of perception, the facility, the artistic constructiveness of the Frenchman at his best; in Victor Hugo there are the grandiloquence, the egotism, and the utter lack of humour that are always present in the Frenchman's graver moods; in Flaubert is perceptible the suggestion of an underlying sordidness and pettiness and localism; in Maupassant there is the cynicism, the mordant, tainting pessimism of the son of Paris;

and in Mendès and Loti the enervation, the rich rottenness of a race that has inbred too much and has thus attained at last to an absolute perfection of artistic method with an incurable, though unconscious, ethical sterility.

But all of these are only partly typical. Not one of them is broadly national and truly representative. It is in Balzac that we get, as we get in no other single writer of any race or age, the life and character of an entire nation drawn for us in their true relations and with the multitudinous completeness of reality. Others who have written tell us something and leave us to infer the rest; Balzac alone has laid a titanic grasp upon an entity and has held it up to us triumphantly for ever. From his brain, as he himself declared, a whole society was born, and when we have come to know it, we have come to know not Paris alone, nor the provinces alone, but France herself — that wonderful, fitful, chivalrous, unstable, brilliant, noble, nervous nation in whose annals we can find epitomised eternally the whole character and history of the Celtic race.

To write of Balzac's work in its entirety is

to write of human life itself, and thus to dip into the illimitable ocean with a paltry cyathus. One ought to spend his time in reading Balzac rather than in writing of him; yet with the centenary of his birth in mind, it may not be too venturesome if, with a sort of literary *pietas*, I note quite briefly two or three of the ideas that especially occur to one as being just now rather pertinent.

And first among these is the one already emphasised — the fact that Balzac is the truest representative in French letters of his country as a whole. In him we do not see the pale, neurotic, morbid fashioner of perverse fancies, enervated in body like Alphonse Daudet, and morbid in mind like J. K. Huysmans. Balzac was no Parisian of the century's end, but a lusty child of old Touraine, bred up in the sunshine and the open air. Broad-shouldered, bull-necked, full of vitality and of the joy of life, with a Rabelaisian laugh and a tremendous temperament, he was a type of the Frenchmen of those earlier days before the nation had been more than decimated by long centuries of fruitless warfare and before its vigour had been sapped by the survival of the unfittest. He might have

been an arquebusier under Dunois, a jovial *gaillard*, a mediæval soldier of fortune; and in his own century and in his own career he showed all the audacity, the splendid hopefulness, and the sublime endurance of his prototype. It was in his life-ambitions, however, that he most fitly summed up the Gallic nature. Everyone who has written of him has quoted his famous outburst to his sister, Laure de Surville: "My two boundless desires, my only ones — to be famous and to be loved — will they ever be satisfied?" It is here that Balzac has expressed the ruling passions of his race — *l'amour et la gloire* — and both in love and in fame he achieved a career that was almost ideal in its way.

Like everyone who has mastered the psychology of social life in its broadest meaning, Balzac owed an immense debt to his friendships with women; and no man could have been more fortunate in the women whom he knew. These friendships were not sentimental in any very serious sense. They were friendships, first of all, of the intellect, touched with just enough of that sympathetic understanding and instinctive reading of the soul that make a friendship of this sort while it

lasts so perfect and so beautiful. He knew George Sand without falling under the spell that proved so fatal to Alfred de Musset; for he felt only the nobler side of her erratic though generous nature which eschewed all petty rivalries and was instinct with profound intelligence. He knew Madame de Berny, a woman older than himself, who helped him live through many of his darkest days without discouragement, and whose friendship was so intimate that he could accept her aid quite frankly and with no legacy of galling obligation or dishonour. He knew Madame Carraud, a woman of supreme good sense and perfect poise, without even a touch of the romantic in her deep affection for him; and to her Balzac owed more, perhaps, than to any other woman, until he met the one who was to be throughout the most creative years of his existence the inspiration and even the motive of his life. He found in her a helpful friend, such as Charles Reade found in Laura Seymour; and it was with Madame Carraud that Balzac read and revised his earlier manuscripts, as it was she who gave to him the peace and rest which were so important for the accomplishment of the gigantic

tasks that he had imposed upon himself. In the great world he was most influenced by the Duchesse de Castries, who alone among these earlier friends appears to have made Balzac care for her as hitherto he had cared for no woman whatsoever. She seems not, however, to have cared for him, in the same way at least, and their friendship was abruptly broken off almost in a day. It is to this more or less unhappy intimacy that a great deal of Balzac's so-called cynicism has been ascribed by students of his life; yet however this may be, he owed her much; for through her he derived at first-hand those minute details of the upper stratum of society that were afterward to be used with such effect. Moreover, while the friendship lasted it had given him both stimulation and enjoyment that balanced the pain which marked its ending; and to the true artist both pain and pleasure alike are essential sources of inspiration. A pretty little romance clings to the name of his feminine correspondent whom the world knows only as "Louise," a woman whom Balzac never met, but with whom he carried on a long and somewhat tender correspondence, and in whom he recognised a mind that

adequately understood and perfectly appreciated his transcendent genius.

Yet all these friendships and aquaintances, and many more, were as nothing to the great love of his life, which came to him after he was already famous, though he had not yet quite grasped supreme success. It was about the year 1833, when, in a hotel at Neuchâtel, he accidentally made the acquaintance of Madame Evelina de Hanska, a wealthy Polish lady married to an invalid. Even their first meeting revealed to both of them an overwhelming attraction for one another. Madame de Hanska is said to have been so profoundly affected as to faint away in the presence of the man who from that time to the end of his life was to look to her for everything — for sympathy, encouragement, affection, love. She was a woman of thirty years, graceful, extremely accomplished, and with an indescribable air of distinction about her, by no means a coquette, but with something mystical in her cast of mind which appealed to a like strain of mysticism in the novelist himself, and which made them understand each other to the very last subtlety of thought and feeling. It was his first real

love, and it was her last; and therefore their association illustrated the very characteristic aphorism which Balzac wrote in a letter to her after he had known her but a few short weeks: "It is only the last love of a woman that can satisfy the first love of a man." Everyone who is familiar with Balzac is familiar with the story of this extraordinary friendship, which endured and grew stronger and more tender with every year that passed. Everyone knows how utterly and absolutely Balzac devoted to this one woman all his genius, his aspiration, the thought of his every moment; how every day, after he had laboured like a slave for eighteen hours, he would take his pen and pour out to her the most intimate details of his daily life; how at her call he would leave everything and rush across the Continent to Poland or to Italy, being radiantly happy if he could but see her face and be for a few days by her side. The very thought of meeting her thrilled him to the very depths of his nature, and made him for weeks and even months beforehand, restless, uneasy, and agitated, with an almost painful happiness. "I recognise," he writes to her

during one of these agonies of anticipation, "the infinite depth of my passion, by the immensity of the void that exists within my soul. Love for me is life, and to-day I feel it more than ever."

It is the most startling proof of his immense vitality, both physical and mental, that so tremendous an emotional strain could be endured by him for years without exhausting his fecundity or blighting his creativeness. One remembers other relations of this sort that have become historical, such as that of Goethe with Frau von Stein, and of Alfred de Musset with George Sand, and in recalling them we can think of nothing but the taint, the upas-poison, which these women cast upon the intellects of the men for whom their love proved in the end to be only a source of physical enervation and intellectual sterility. With Balzac, however, the period of his love was the period of his most brilliant work, and this was true in spite of the anguish of long separations, marked as such separations always are by hours of doubt, of the dread that comes from the play of a too vivid imagination, and the complaints excited by what appears to be

caprice or coldness or a faint indifference. Even in Balzac one notices toward the last a certain sense of strain underlying what he wrote, a certain lack of elasticity and facility if of nothing more; yet on the whole it is likely that without this friendship Balzac would have been less great than he actually became, as it is certain that had it been broken off he would have ceased to write or to care for anything whatever in the world. Madame Hanska's husband died in 1842, and then for eight more years this friendship, which had become a most passionate and romantic love, continued, though it remained ostensibly a friendship still; for Madame Hanska could not marry him as yet, because of certain complications due to the interests of her children and her estates, and because Balzac himself was plunged in what appeared to be quite hopeless debts. In 1846, she finally agreed to marry him, yet still for four years either vacillation or caprice deterred her from performing the promise that had meant so much to him. His letters of this period are marked by the agony and the half-despair of hope too long deferred. She interrupted his writing, she did not always keep her promises to meet him,

and even while he pours out his whole soul to her, he begs her not to paralyse his mind by uncertainty and suspense. In 1850, however, there came a change. Balzac's fame was at its zenith. There poured in upon him a golden flood from the works that had at last secured a universal recognition. He was rich, he was hailed as master in his own sphere of effort, he had won the great success for which he had been toiling for nearly forty years. And then at last the woman whom he loved became his wife, and the other of his two ambitions was realised. From one point of view, there is something pathetic in the thought that in the very moment when all that he had wished for had been won, and after he had known but little more than a few weeks of perfect happiness, Balzac should die; and yet in another way there is a completeness about this history of a life that cannot be forgotten. Had he lived, his genius must have waned, perhaps his love might also have been lessened; while, dying as he did, he seems to have attained a marvellous apotheosis in which there were combined the two things which he had set before himself as giving all that life contains worth striving for.

Honoré de Balzac

There is something timely in the recollection at the present moment of the true significance of Balzac's work in fiction. In these days, when so much is written about the theory of Realism and of its further development into Naturalism, one never should forget that in Balzac we possess a supreme example of consummate achievement by the side of which mere theory is pale and cold, and sometimes little less than ludicrous. There are those who on the one hand try to teach us that in life it is only the trivial that is real; as there are others who can see no true reality in anything beyond the sphere of the foul, the monstrous, and the bestial. Mr. Howells will write persuasively to show that life is after all essentially quite commonplace; that in it the elements of the terrible, the striking, and the dramatic are so infrequent as to make their introduction inconsistent with an impression of reality. M. Émile Zola and his imitators will narrow their observation to that little corner of existence where crawl unclean and loathly things, and they will tell us that only here can instructive human documents be found. Realism, therefore, by some has been shrivelled into Triv-

ialism, and by others it has been corrupted into Naturalism; and this is why one turns to Balzac with a sense of comfort and security to find in him a broader and more vital meaning for the delineation of human life under the guise of fiction, for it is Balzac alone who has drawn life for us as a whole — its heights, its depths, its tragedies, its comedies, its trivialities, and its momentousness.

Even to describe the scheme of his great *Comédie Humaine* shows what a giant he was. It was all of life that he desired to show us, a picture not of any single class or rank or trade, not town alone nor country alone, but a complete and lasting picture of modern civilisation. In the long series of novels that make up the *Comédie*, he has come so near success that it has been said of him that he produced what is in itself almost a literature. The men and women whom he draws for us are every one of them distinct and living individuals. We do not merely read of them; we *know* them, and there has been even written a biographical dictionary of his characters, of which the important ones number more than two thousand. One cannot read a single novel, nor, for that matter,

a dozen novels of the series and form a just conception of the tremendous task which this extraordinary genius set himself. One must study him and read him as a whole, and then re-read and further study him, before one really comes to know why Balzac is unique in the annals of all literature. Taine said of him that there were in Balzac an archæologist, an architect, an upholsterer, a tailor, an old-clothes dealer, an appraiser, a physiologist, and a notary. But even such a saying as this gives no adequate conception of his versatility and grasp upon all sides of life; for it should be added that he is also an analyst, an idealist, and a realist combined in one; and there is a touch of mysticism in his mind, a certain fondness for the supernatural, that, so far from being alien to the spirit of humanity, is the one thing that was needed to make his picture true; while he has also that sort of imagination which, in the fiction-writer as in the historian and the mathematician, makes for verity, because it goes below the surface and evokes the evidence of the things not seen, and because it shows to us the world not only as it appears to be and as we know it, but as it really is; and which in consequence ele-

vates the work of a literary artist above the plane of a rhyparographer, and above that of a mere photographer; since a master such as Balzac is not contented to set before us an elaborate canvas in which each figure is correctly drawn and coloured, but he is rather one who works out each separate detail in its relation to the whole and looks to the effect of the finished picture as the end towards which he labours.

The place which this great genius must ultimately hold in literary history has not as yet been definitely settled. French critics link his name with that of Shakespeare, while English critics seem to think that a comparison like this is very daring. My own belief is that at the last his name will be placed higher still than Shakespeare's, at the very apex of the pyramid of literary fame. A novelist, if he be as great as Balzac, is far more fortunate than the dramatist; for the novel admits of the perfect evolution of character in its most minute details, while the dramatist can at the most give only a series of instantaneous impressions. These impressions may be vivid, their suggestiveness may be very striking; but as a whole there must

be always so much left to the imagination as to make a certain thinness and lack of body quite inevitable. Yet after all, the comparison of Balzac with Shakespeare is not a comparison that need be made at all. Their spheres are really different. The two men are not rivals. For Shakespeare is, in the last analysis, primarily a poet with an incidental genius for dramatic situations; while Balzac stands first in equal perfection an artist, a dramatist, and a great psychologist all blended into one.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF TENNYSON

The Human Side of Tennyson

WHEN the memoir of Lord Tennyson, written by his son, appeared, the book was hailed with eagerness by two entirely different sets of readers; or rather, one may say with more exactness, it was read from two entirely different points of view. There were many persons who were especially concerned with the purely literary side of England's greatest laureate, with the sources whence he gathered his suggestions, with his theory of his own technique, and with the intimate details of his poetical composition. There were many more who sought for something really accurate and authentic of Tennyson the man, — of the living personality that lay behind his splendid and stately creations, like a magician standing at the heart of some marvellous maze of shimmering enchantment.

To the analyst of style, to the expert in metrical experiment, and to the critical student of our nineteenth-century English, no

poet in his work suggests so many interesting questions as does Tennyson. And in the scholar, also, who can look at literature in a broader way, as part of the culture-history of an epoch, the poetry of Tennyson inspires curious reflections. For it was his extraordinary good fortune not only in his method to develop to the utmost all the latent music of our mother tongue, and in his themes to sweep the entire gamut of feeling and emotion, but in doing so to bring to bear the finest, broadest, truest scholarship, fused indistinguishably with a subtly penetrating knowledge of mankind; so that almost alone among the greatest modern singers, he received the enthusiastic plaudits of the learned, and at the same time touched the heart of the unlettered and the lowly. And this is in reality the final test of the poetic art, which in its supreme development is not for any class or set or coterie of men, but for the enduring joy of all humanity.

Among recent poets Tennyson is in this respect almost, if not entirely, unique. He is saturated with the classical literature; he knows it, not as a university don or as a pedant knows it, as something laboriously acquired, and therefore a thing of which its

possessor is always ostentatiously self-conscious; but it is a part of himself as truly as are his modern sympathies, his consummate mastery of his native tongue, and his unerring instinct for cadences and harmonies. Take any one of such fine poems as "Tithonus," or "Œnone" or "Lucretius," and the classical scholar will find a hundred subtle reminiscences of the Greek and Roman singers; yet these reminiscences are not dragged in as tags or lamely introduced just because of their suitability to a given purpose, but they are so completely blended with the poet's own splendid diction and vivid searching thought as to be truly his, and therefore they yield to the cultivated reader an added richness and charm, without even the faintest flavour of imitation or repetition. They are what Vergil's reminiscences of Ennius were to the later Romans, — simply a tinting, an added magnificence, a reminder that here is not only a rich and noble imagination at play, but also a mind teeming with all that is beautiful and best in the whole great past of man's artistic creativeness.

Nor is it merely in his occasional themes and in his frequent turns of phrase that Tennyson recalls his classic masters. His wonderful

harmonies, his suggested and unuttered music, would have been impossible except to one who had noted and understood the melodic capacity of human speech applied to perfect diction, as seen in those immortal singers who had at their command a complex metrical system based upon the nicest and most delicate quantitative distinctions, and who studied the melody of language until they could make their lines sing like a bird, or trill like a silver flute, or roar and thunder with the deep organ music of the tempestuous sea. Tennyson is everywhere classical in his profound comprehension of the requirements of his art; while he is modern in the spirit that directs it and in the ends to which he so unerringly applies it. And this modernness is to be detected partly in his choice of themes, yet still more fully in his spiritual treatment of them. For, unlike the Greeks and the Romans, the simplest things of life can stir him deeply. The obvious and the usual are so treated by him that they, too, sing or sob at the master's touch. The ripple of the brook that rushes over its pebbles, the dying note of the distant bugle horn, the hopes and fears of the village girl, and even the shrewd, homely wisdom

of the peasant, are to him as instinct with true poetry as that sublimely useless rush of the Six Hundred on the Russian guns, or the solemn passing of the soul that vanishes out into illimitable darkness amid the sound of the breaking surf and the chime of the evening bell.

The stateliness of Tennyson, his loftiness of mind, his true patrician scorn of what is low and mean are felt in every line he wrote. The spirit of the English gentleman who loves the truth and worships honour is most clearly seen in the selection of King Arthur as the hero of that cluster of superb delineations which together form an epic built round the central figure of one who is the type incarnate of true chivalry. Yet the marvel still remains that as, with all his subtle learning, Tennyson is the chosen poet of the unlettered, so with all his aristocratic pride and elevation he none the less can sweep the heart-strings of the lowly. He mingles in his art the varied powers of a score of other poets. Thus, Swinburne is quite as deeply versed in the classical tradition; he has the gift of melody in almost an equal measure; yet he is but little read by men

who know no Latin and no Greek. Longfellow had the pathos, the apparent artlessness, and the simplicity; but he lacked the strength and force, while his scholarship was superficial; so that men who are supremely cultivated pass him by as being little more than an amiable and pleasing rhymer. Kipling, who should by right have succeeded to the laurel, is full of fire and splendid energy, but he lacks the spiritual element, while the rude vigour of much that he sets down too often repels by its sheer brutality. It was Tennyson alone, in our day, who could dominate all types of mind, and kindle the imagination and stir the blood alike of peasant and patrician. No wonder, then, that every thoughtful student of pure poetry is eager for some light upon the processes that went to make so marvellous an artist and so supreme a master of emotion.

But if Tennyson the poet is an object of especial interest there is much in Tennyson the man that still more piques the curiosity. Almost alone among English-speaking men of letters, he succeeded in maintaining that freedom from intrusion which is every day becoming more difficult for the man or the

woman of distinction. To him there was something vulgar in the publicity that so many persons not only tolerate but even court. His work belonged to the world, but he meant his life to be all his own, open to his nearest friends, and barred against all others. And so he shut himself up in the Isle of Wight, as being a place not easily accessible to the casual tourist, and he afterwards removed thence, to a still more sheltered spot. The reporter never got beyond his gateway; the gossiping American tourist never had a chance to publish any small-beer chronicles of his daily life and talk. And the chosen friends who knew him well and who were free to come and go at pleasure proved singularly reticent and discreet, so that throughout the lifetime of the poet, a bit of genuine Tennysoniana was the very rarest of all literary treasures. Of his life and of his person the world at large had only a vague impression comparable with that which the fisher-folk of his island home at times received of a tall and striking figure, wrapped in an ample cloak and crowned with an eccentric hat, walking up and down in the mists of early evening, lost in thought or

muttering the verses that were presently to delight the world with their exquisite and perfect charm.

Therefore, as I have already said, the memoir written by his son was regarded and examined from two points of view, — first as to the light which it might shed upon Lord Tennyson's artistic theories and methods, and in the second place as to the more intimate knowledge which it was expected to give of the living, breathing, human man who won for English poetry an added glory. From both these points of view the memoir itself proved to be wholly disappointing, and it is instructive to consider the reason why this judgment must be passed upon it; for the consideration will serve to show what limits must be set to the study and the understanding of the creative processes and the intimate personality of transcendent genius.

First of all, let us very briefly take up the question of how far the world has been enlightened as to the inner history and the psychical side of the poetry of Tennyson. If anyone could so enlighten us, surely it would be the poet's son. It was long ago that Hallam Tennyson set himself the task which

he finally completed in this memoir. His father knew his purpose and approved of it. Hence, every possible aid was given him and every possible source of knowledge was freely open to him. He received and carefully preserved the original drafts of all the greater poems. He noted down his father's statements as to sources and suggestions. He had the precious privilege of long and searching conversations in which the poet spoke with the greatest frankness and freedom regarding every sort of theme suggested by the study of his verse; and he recorded carefully a thousand interesting details regarding the circumstances that attended the composition of the various poems. One had the right then to expect to find in the wealth of material so patiently collected and correlated and massed together, a treasure-house of priceless information. One might not unreasonably suppose that through this intimate knowledge one could go back of the poet's finished work to the workings of the mind that lay behind it, and by following up the stream of his poetry, stand for a moment beside its very source. Let us see, therefore, how much real insight can be actually gained from the immense collection

of facts which Hallam Tennyson has recorded for us; and this may best be done by taking from his pages some of the notes and facts and comments that will be sufficiently illustrative of all the rest.

Thus, of "In Memoriam," one of the most deeply thoughtful threnodies that the world has ever read, his biographer gives in Tennyson's own words the original design of the poem: —

"It must be remembered," Lord Tennyson wrote, "that this is a poem and not a biography. . . . It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*, ending with happiness. The sections were written at many different places and as the pleasures of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication until I had written so many. The different moods of sorrow, as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer only through Faith in a God of Love. 'I' is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him."

As to the gradual evolution of the *Idylls of the King* much interesting information is set down. The germ of this series of noble

poems is traced to the short lyric entitled, "The Lady of Shalott," which appeared as early as 1832; though even before this (in 1830) the other lyric, "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere," had been partly written. Among Lord Tennyson's papers his son found a sketch of an epic on the same subject set down in prose about the year 1833. Some scattering notes of the same date have also been preserved. They are very short and very fragmentary, but they are especially significant as showing that from the very conception of the idea, the *Idylls* had presented themselves to their author as embodying an allegory, in which King Arthur prefigures religious faith, Modred scepticism, Merlin science, Excalibur war, and the Round Table liberal institutions. At this time, however, Tennyson had not decided definitely whether to develop the theme in epic form or as a musical masque, for his manuscript-books preserve the rough draft of a scenario into which the episode of Elaine was afterwards introduced. The poet made a long study of the whole Arthurian legend, — talking, thinking, and reading about the subject until his mind was saturated with his theme. He visited Wales

because of his interest in what he called "the greatest of all poetical subjects;" it was not until the plan had been thoroughly worked out and had been in his mind for more than twenty years that he finally published (in 1855) the first instalment of the poem in "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere;" and even then, with the applause of the whole English-speaking world to urge him on, he did not hurry the completion of the cycle; so that it was not until 1885 that "Balin and Balan" rounded out the twelve books and made perfect one of the noblest monuments of literature.

Of the stirring "Charge of the Light Brigade," we learn that Tennyson in reading the account of the battle of Balaclava in the London *Times*, found there the phrase "someone had blundered," and that this was the origin of the metre of the poem, besides furnishing its author with one of the lines — a line much criticised, by the way, as being too colloquial in its phrasing. Of "Maud" it is said that in reading it aloud the poet always prefaced the reading with a long explanation of its dramatic qualities; and his son thinks that his delivery of this poem showed him to

be possessed of the dramatic qualities of a great actor. In the metre of the short poem "Boadicea," Tennyson greatly gloried; but he feared that those who read it would not understand the rhythm.

We have much miscellaneous information about Tennyson's views of his own art and of metrical technique, though these views are not set forth in the memoir in any connected or systematised way. He disliked hexameters in English, yet rather inconsistently experimented in other classical metres to which our language is still less adapted, notably the Alcaic, as in his "Ode to Milton." He believed Vergil's finest hexameters to be found in the Georgics, and he held with all the stubbornness of an Englishman the view that the absurd English pronunciation of Greek is grander than that which the Greeks must have employed, "with a difference as between the roar of the Northern Sea and the hissing of the Mediterranean." Some attention is given to his rather radical opinions about blank verse in English, and it is noted that his own blank verse is practically a new invention, differing from that of the Elizabethans and of Milton in being more

flexible and varied, and also, one may add, more difficult to read with good effect. He made some rather comic lines by way of showing what would be the effect of a metrical, as distinct from a natural, accent in English verse — among them this pentameter: —

Áll men alíke hate slóps,‖ párticulárly gruél.

It is noted also, that Tennyson thought himself the inventor of the metre of "In Memoriam," and only afterwards discovered that it had been already used by Ben Jonson, Sir Philip Sidney, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Not without some value is the statement made in the memoir to the effect that, judging by the personal letters called forth by them and by the number of translations made of them, the most popular poems of Tennyson are "Enoch Arden," "Aylmer's Field," "The Grandmother," "Sea Dreams," "The Northern Farmer," "Tithonus," and "The Flower," together with "In Memoriam." Of "Enoch Arden," sixty thousand copies were sold in an incredibly short time.

It will be seen that the sort of information which has been here detailed, while it is very interesting, and while it has a real value in

literary history, does not, after all, give one anything resembling an actual insight into the subjective processes of the poet's work. And this is inevitable. In the nature of things an inspiration can not be analysed; the soul of art can not be vivisected. A great genius can not set down in bald detail the innumerable influences that guide him in evolving an immortal work. He does not know them himself; he is not conscious of them. His mind is richly stored with thoughts that are apparently unrelated. His soul is vibrating to a myriad delicate harmonies that are as yet completely unevoked. Then comes a time when some strong emotion, some powerful wave of sentiment or of feeling, sweeps over him, and of a sudden a set of ideas that before were nebulous and half chaotic leap out before the consciousness, arranging themselves at once into harmonious relation to each other. The imagination is kindled, the brain throbs with the passion of creativeness, the words come swiftly and in melodious fitness to clothe the thought in language that shall ennoble and enrich it — and a great poem is born. But who can say of such a work that one thing or another is alone re-

sponsible for its suggestion? It may be the rapid impulse of a moment, or it may be the ripened fruit of years and years. Of each of these processes an illustration has been given above in the origin of the "Charge of the Light Brigade," and in the evolution of the *Idylls* — and of the two, the first perhaps is the more significant and truly typical.

It is, however, when we apply to the memoir the second test that we find it chiefly lacking. When we ask for information of Tennyson the poet, we learn whatever the closest observation and the most intimate knowledge can afford; and if all this be defective, it is defective only from the nature of the case. But when we ask to be enlightened as to Tennyson the man, then we know that our disappointment is due wholly to the accident of the biographer's relationship to his subject. We desire to know Tennyson as he really was, with all his weaknesses as well as all his strength, with his temperamental idiosyncrasies as well as his intellectual grandeur. Now the present Lord Tennyson did his work as a dutiful and loving son should do such work. One can but praise him for the great discretion, the delicate feeling, and the tact

that he displayed. He gave an agreeable picture of a character that was really fine, and he set forth the history of a poet who was in very truth a most consummate genius. But he wrote first of all as a son, and not as a searching analyst; he also suppressed much that others could have written and that he could not. He chose perforce *pietas* and not simply *veritas* as the motto of this portion of his work.

Of what sort, in reality, was Tennyson the man? As revealed to us by his son he appears a noble and somewhat stately personage, grave, and full of proud patrician dignity. This side is lightened by touches here and there that show a gleam of humour, an interest in the common things of life, a quiet love of fun, a latent geniality. But this lighter side is but a glimpse, a flicker, a quite artistically introduced relief to a picture that as a whole is one of almost haughty seriousness. We lay down the book with an impression of a character that is somewhat ideal, one that explains some of the phases of his genius, yet one that is defective as a clue to much that we can feel in reading his completed work. The Tennyson of the memoir is the Tennyson who wrote the *Idylls*, the

Tennyson of "In Memoriam;" but it is not the Tennyson of "The Northern Farmer," and of "The May Queen," nor is it quite the Tennyson of those stirring lyrics that voice the soul of martial England.

Now, it was right for Hallam Tennyson to give the world a more or less idealised delineation of his father; and, if one seeks elsewhere for a truer and fuller knowledge of the man, it is not in the spirit of iconoclasm nor in that other spirit, so prevalent to-day, which worships ugliness in the morbid vein of Baudelaire. It is rather the desire to know so much of the whole truth as may be necessary to the perfect comprehension of a great man's art, and to explain what cannot otherwise be wholly comprehensible. And, indeed, when all is said that must be said, the magic of the poet and the greatness of the man will not one whit be lessened; they will only be explained.

Lord Tennyson came of a stock in which were traceable three quite distinct and different racial strains. His father's family was originally of Danish blood, descended from the Scandinavian invaders who occupied the territory to the north of the Humber in King

Alfred's time. Upon his mother's side is found French ancestry; and these two elements had been blended in every century with a strong infusion of pure Saxon blood. It is no idle fancy that detects in the poet's work the vital qualities, the distinguishing characteristics, that are due to each of these three sources. To the French strain in Tennyson he owes his sense of style, his perfect clarity, his ease and flexibility of diction, and his exquisite appreciation of the unique and fitting word that always rose responsively to mirror in its sound and sense the subtlest shades of thought. From the Danish element his poetry received much of its eerie picturesqueness and the fine imaginative quality which, with a touch of wildness, forever glows and shimmers in the poetry of the Scandinavian North. And to the Saxon blood are due that underlying strength and sturdiness, that homely quaintness, and that ripe humanity which give to all the other qualities their full perfection and enduring power. It was this last, indeed, that bound the whole together, and imparted to the whole an honest, manly, human touch.

The Saxon side, the yeoman side, was very

marked in all the personal characteristics of the man. It showed itself in many ways — in ways that are intensely characteristic of the Englishman; and it is essential that these shall be least suggested in any conscientious effort, however slight, to link the poet with the man.

In the first place, the self-assertiveness which is so typically English was very strong in Tennyson. He had but little care for another's feelings. Visitors who came to him on his invitation or on the invitation of his wife were often appalled by his grimness, his sullen silence, his rude indifference to all the duties of a host. Nor was even his sociability at times less typical of a strangely self-centred nature; since it often took the form of egotism, and he would bear down all other conversation in his arrogant monologues upon his own achievements, ending usually with interminable recitations of his own productions; for he was inordinately fond of declamatory renderings of his latest verse; and while, no doubt, one might esteem it a high privilege to hear Tennyson interpreted by himself, the fact remains that the act was one of gross indifference to others.

In some still less commendable ways he

showed the same aggressiveness. Professor Max Müller, in his lately published reminiscences, gives us a very curious case in point. While Professor Müller and his wife were still newcomers in the town of Oxford, they had the honour of entertaining Tennyson, until then a stranger to them, in their home. He spent the night there, and in the morning strode into the breakfast-room, and, without the usual salutation, stalked up to the table, which was already laid. Whipping the cover off the principal dish, he snorted with disgust.

"Mutton chops!" he roared. "The staple of every second-rate inn in England."

Again, this very fundamental and pervasive trait sometimes appeared as selfishness and perhaps ingratitude. His biographer records the long and intimate friendship between Tennyson and Edward Fitzgerald, the translator, or, perhaps, one might say the creator, of Omar Kháyyám. But naturally no mention is made of one fact which, in his lifetime, Tennyson's nearest intimates deplored and often made the subject of apologetic comment. When he was young and rather straitened in his circumstances, the future laureate, then quite unknown, first won Fitz-

gerald's friendship. Fitzgerald recognised his genius and was to him far more than any ordinary friend, opening his purse to him, helping him in all his numerous perplexities, and giving him the aid and comfort of which he often was most seriously in need. But when Tennyson had become famous and Fitzgerald was an old and feeble man, then the distinguished poet let the friendship die. He never went to see Fitzgerald; he never asked him to his house; and he seemed entirely forgetful of any debt of gratitude.

Another quality like this — an English, Saxon, peasant quality — is found in a strong vein of coarseness that belonged to the very nature of the man. He had a homely way of uttering coarse things in language that was direct and forcible, but that was strange enough in the mouth of a poet of such exquisite delicacy and grace. A very curious story that has never before, I think, been printed, may be set down here with an apology for telling it. It illustrates so perfectly one phase of Tennyson's mentality that the reader will perhaps forgive its crudeness. It seems that Carlyle once, while visiting the poet, brought up the subject of William the Con-

queror, and with his usual tendency to hero-worship set forth in a long and glowing monologue the ability and native power of the Norman king. He lauded his martial qualities, he defended and justified his cruelties to the vanquished Saxons, and he ended with a passionate eulogy of the man. All this time Tennyson had uttered not a word, but sat in silence, puffing slowly at the stem of a short black pipe. At last, after an hour of declamation, Carlyle turned to his listener and cried out, triumphantly: —

"Come, man, what think ye of him, now?"

Tennyson took another puff or two and then drew the pipe from his mouth.

"If I had been there," he observed sententiously, "he'd very soon have felt my knife in his guts!"

When Longfellow first visited Tennyson, the Englishman entertained him for an hour or more with the narration of obscene stories. Longfellow, a man of extreme and almost feminine refinement, listened silently, suppressing out of courtesy his ineffable disgust. Afterward a friend of both of them ventured as delicately as possible to intimate to Tennyson how he had shocked and disappointed his

American guest. There still exists a letter which is half apology and half explanation, written to Longfellow by the other poet, and giving, as an excuse, the reaction that he always felt after devoting himself so intensely to the subtlest niceties of language — a reaction which drove him often into the utterance of things both gross and vile.

It is not necessary to illustrate further this side of Tennyson's personality, as to which, however, an abundance of authentic material exists. What has been said is quite sufficient to explain some characteristics of his work. And it has, indeed, a larger meaning of which one ought not to lose sight. It touches the far-reaching question of the true significance, and the limitations also, of the very highest culture — the culture that gets its inspiration from the past and that is linked inseparably with the classical traditions.

The assertion is often very freely made that there is something intellectually enervating in the academic training; that it kills originality, that it over-refines, and makes of its possessor a creature of mere rule and precedent, so finical and so self-critical as to lose all spontaneity and creative energy.

There is an element of truth in this, but it is only part of a much broader truth — that there is no training whatsoever which can compensate for the lack of native gifts. A saphead will be a saphead still, even after the university has done its very best for him. A flabby, hesitating, timid spirit will acquire no real strength and force from any teaching. And more than this, it is quite true that there is such a thing as over-refinement. A person whose cast of mind is wholly æsthetic, whose life lies all in his emotions and his feelings, and in whom these things are not kept sanely balanced by a certain purely physical endowment, will surely suffer harm from any training which accentuates what is already abnormally developed in him. The seeds of higher culture are like the seeds of grain in the parable of the sower. If they fall on stony ground they can but die; if they fall on an impoverished soil they will germinate to sicken and wither away. It is only when they are dropped into the teeming, fructifying earth that they spring up into a growth that yields abundant harvest.

But when an intellect is richly endowed with all the highest qualities of imagination

and insight and with an exquisite sensitiveness for what is rare and beautiful in nature and in human life and thought, and when this intellect is buttressed by the good, sound animality of the fully developed man, then it is that the old-time training can accomplish such results as nothing else has ever yet evolved. For the whole splendour of the classic past, flaming upon the ardent mind in a stupendous revelation, inspires and stimulates to unsparing effort. It brings no dark discouragement, but it rouses emulation and whets the edge of intellectual ambition. It sharpens the mental vision and refines the taste; and if there exists a coarser strain, this is not destroyed nor yet intensified; it is but transmuted by a magic touch into a source of strength and power. And it was just this perfect combination of the intellectual and the physical, blended harmoniously by the classical tradition into an absolutely perfect unity, that gave to the world in Tennyson a poet who could stir the heart of every kind of man, and who, therefore, may even now with confidence be added to the roll of those few golden-throated singers whose names the world will never willingly let die.

A MAD PHILOSOPHER

A Mad Philosopher

THERE are certain fundamental facts connected with the mystery of our existence, of which every human being is perfectly aware, yet which are, nevertheless, in our ordinary thought, entirely devoid of actual significance. We know them; we have known them all our lives; we even think of them from time to time; but we do it in a most impersonal and casual sort of way, as though they had no vital and immediate concern for us. They do not affect our happiness from day to day. They do not alter our mode of life. To all intents and purposes they are utterly unreal.

Of all these facts, to take the tritest and at the same time the most terrible illustration, there is none so significant as the certainty of death. From early childhood every human being knows that sooner or later he is doomed to die, that a death sentence has been passed upon him at his birth, and that the execution

of this sentence is possible at any moment of the day or night. He may be cut down in an instant when he is in the vigour of life, when he is just beginning to enjoy the pleasures of existence to the full, when he has learned the whole secret of living, of how to extract from it the last delicious drop of pleasure, emotional, physical, and intellectual, and when the world holds out to him the exquisite delights that come to one who has combined and blended the energy of youth with that discriminating knowledge which matured experience alone can give. Or he may live on and on to the greatest age that man has ever known; yet after all, this will be at the most a short reprieve, and it will enable him only to taste in advance the bitterness of death in life, to feel his powers fail, his brain grow dull, his senses blunted, the passionate joy in life decay, and to find himself tottering, a wrinkled, tremulous, and infinitely lonely dotard, down the dark slopes that lead to the inevitable end. Come when it will, in youth or age, Death always stands a ghastly figure at the door, pointing its spectral finger toward the yawning grave, and signifying just one thing to all of us—

the shrouded coffin, the chill damp earth, the crawling worm, and the loathsome process of corruption.

This fact, as a fact, is fully understood by every living man and woman on this earth. We might suppose that the horror of it and the utter impossibility of an escape from it would turn the world into an abode of wailing; that human beings would go shuddering by with blanched faces and livid lips; that they would seek their beds at night with a feeling of infinite dread; and that morning would mean to them only the beginning of another day of endless apprehension. It would seem impossible for them to laugh and jest, to scheme for the future, and to give their hearts and souls to the petty pleasures of the moment without a thought of anything beyond. It would seem incredible that they should pass the spectre at the door a hundred times a day and never heed his menace, and that when they stand beside an open grave and hear the crunching of the coffin as it slides down to its resting-place, their thoughts should even then be wandering to other themes, — to their business, their amusements, or their dinners. Nevertheless, this

is precisely what they do. Once in a while, to be sure, as though the finger of some unseen spirit had been laid upon them, the whole reality does flash most fearfully upon their minds, and then for an instant they see life as it really is — a mockery, a threat, a charnel-house of horror and despair. Yet this is only for the moment. It comes to anyone but seldom; and after it has passed, it leaves no trace behind on thought or conduct. And this is well; for were it otherwise, the human reason could not bear it, and the world would be a world of cowering imbeciles and raving maniacs.

There are certain other facts and certain other possibilities and conceptions which the mind of man has also recognised, yet of which the actuality rarely comes to us in all its overwhelming and stupendous meaning. To know the facts as mere expressions of accepted truth is very simple, but to know them so as to *feel* them, so that they will smite home upon the consciousness in all their dread sublimity, is seldom given to any man or woman. The thought involved is so vast, so overwhelming, so tremendous, that the mere intellect, strain though it may, can never

grasp it, but stands pitifully helpless in its presence; and it is only when imagination throws a piercing ray of light upon the mind and stimulates it into almost superhuman prescience, that for a moment or two we gain a glimpse of all the awful truth. Of these conceptions there are two whose mention may suffice to make my meaning clear,—the conception of Eternity in time and of Infinity in space. We write and speak about them both. They are, as it were, linguistic symbols of two facts which we have universally accepted. The schoolmen chatter of them glibly; yet, perhaps it is not oftener than once in a whole lifetime that the awfulness of what they mean is ever flashed upon a single human mind. Eternity of being—to go on and on and on through billions and trillions of centuries and then through billions and trillions more, and to remember that even then the very smallest mite of time has not yet passed in comparison with what Eternity must really mean, that nothing can end, that there can be no stopping-place, that though one loathe the very thought of more existence, it must still go on through countless and unnumbered æons—this is a con-

ception that staggers the very boldest intellect and makes the thought of immortality a thing of utter ghastliness. It is sublime, but it is so full of horror that its contemplation shakes the reason. Mere words can seldom make it real to us, and this is also true of any clear impression of Infinity. There is only one short passage in all the literature that I have ever read, which for the instant makes upon the mind even the most fleeting image of the true significance of what to men at most times is a word and nothing more. This passage is contained in Thomas Hardy's most remarkable story entitled *Two on a Tower*, and it is the passage in which the young astronomer, St. Cleeve, standing at night in his extemporised observatory, speaks of the interstellar spaces: —

He tried to give her yet another idea of the size of the universe; never was there a more ardent endeavour to bring down the immeasurable to human comprehension! By figure of speech and apt comparisons he took her mind into leading-strings, compelling her to follow him into wildernesses of which she had never in her life even realised the existence.

"There is a size at which dignity begins," he exclaimed; "further on there is a size at which

grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe. So am I not right in saying that those minds who exert their imaginative powers to bury themselves in the depths of that universe merely strain their faculties to gain a new horror?

"And to add a new weirdness to what the sky possesses in its size and formlessness, there is involved the quality of decay. For all the wonder of these everlasting stars, eternal spheres, and what not, they are not everlasting, they are not eternal; they burn out like candles. You see that dying one in the body of the Greater Bear? Two centuries ago it was as bright as the others. The senses may become terrified by plunging among them as they are, but there is a pitifulness even in their glory. Imagine them all extinguished, and your mind feeling its way through a heaven of total darkness, occasionally striking against the black, invisible cinders of those stars."

The conception of Infinity and the conception of Eternity, portentous though they be, are in their nature wholly simple and axiomatic. The objective understanding of them involves no complex reasoning, no delicate balancing of opposing theories, no subtle

argument, no tense strain upon the logical faculties. That there should be, indeed, any absolute limitation of either Time or Space is utterly unthinkable. If, then, with all their simplicity, it is quite beyond the ordinary intellect to grasp at will the full appreciation of their real meaning, what shall be said of other themes and other concepts which belong to speculative philosophy and which are by no means simple, but of which the very mention raises in the mind questions of infinite difficulty? Their scope is as great as that of those already mentioned, they have an importance that is sometimes almost fearful to consider, and every one of them is complicated with a problem; so that the intellect can not grasp them in their entirety as single elemental concepts, but apart even from their vastness, finds itself at once plunged into a nebulous and chaotic mist of doctrine. The question of Reality as against Appearance, the question of the possibility of Objective Truth, the opposition of Being and Becoming, and in the sphere of ethics, the problems of the existence of Evil, of the justification of Life, of the attainment of Selflessness — what must be the effect of these and a score of other

complicated and insoluble problems upon a thoughtful mind that seriously attempts to master them in all their maddening tortuosity?

The answer is not far to seek. A dry, unspiritual, barren, plodding sort of mind may deal with them as it might deal with the factors of a mathematical problem. The ideas involved are merely counters in a game. The reasoning finds its expression very largely in a sort of metaphysical logomachy, a juggling with words, the re-arrangement of a Chinese puzzle. Of the true significance of these themes, of the possibilities involved in them, a mind like this has no vital appreciation whatsoever, any more than it possesses a real insight into the horrors of Infinity and the ghastliness of Eternity, or any more than the common man possesses a realisation of the fact that he must surely die. But take a mind whose powers of reasoning are reinforced and quickened by a strong imagination — a sensitive mind that thrills responsively to every subtle influence, and one that not only sees and understands but feels — and then the very contemplation of such themes is full of danger; for it sees too clearly and it feels too keenly to be safe. It looks beyond the

word-juggling, and peering fearfully into the awful verities that lie beyond, it suffers as a mind would suffer could it, for instance, realise at every moment the imminence of Death and the appalling significance of Eternity. Such, indeed, are the only minds that can pursue the study of philosophy with any adequate conception of its meaning; and yet for them this study, on any but its purely historical side, is an intellectual curse and a source of almost certain peril.

The truth of what has just been said can find no better, and surely no more melancholy illustration, than is afforded by the career of a thinker and writer who is still alive and whose works have lately appeared in an English version.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, a tragic figure in the history of modern philosophy, was born in 1844, and pursued his higher studies at Bonn and Leipzig, where from 1864 to 1867 he attended lectures in classical philology — a subject which throughout his entire academic life remained ostensibly his especial *Fach*. In it, indeed, he won so much distinction that he was called in 1869 to a classical professorship at Basel, which he held

for a period of ten years, retiring in 1879 upon a pension. Nietzsche was a man of remarkable natural gifts. A bold and vigorous intellect that never shrank from any problem, however difficult, a power of reasoning that pursued relentlessly every premise to its last results and accepted frankly every logical deduction, and possessing the creative imagination of a great artist, coupled with marvellous insight and acumen, this German scholar and thinker entered on his life's career with such advantages as are given to very few. Moreover, he was possessed of extraordinary literary gifts. His power of expression was remarkable. He had enriched and disciplined his mind by the study of the noblest writers of antiquity, and he worked out for himself a style that is unique in philosophical literature. Nervous, vivid, and picturesque, full of fire and a splendid vitality, it flashed and coruscated like a glowing flame, and it had a sort of dithyrambic movement that at times recalls the swing of the Pindaric odes whose imagery is almost equalled by his own.

With all these noble gifts of intellect and of expression, Nietzsche burst like a meteor into the upper realms of philosophic specula-

tion and at once both startled and entranced all minds by the boldness of his thought and the magnificence of his diction. He had read widely in the literature of Greece, and had been especially attracted by the thought of Plato. He had, moreover, dipped into some of the Oriental philosophies — the Zoroastrian and the Buddhistic more especially — and his thought had become deeply tinged with their strange and subtle influence. Passing on to modern speculation, he had found in it much to attract and stimulate; but it was the gloomy and impressive pessimism of Schopenhauer that appealed to him most strongly. Its fascination, indeed, for a time proved irresistible, and he became an ardent advocate and strenuous disciple of that thinker. His earliest published work, while keeping to the field of classical philology, is an attempt to bring that science into close relations with the Schopenhauerian ideal. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* he gives an acute and searching interpretation of Greek tragedy from the standpoint of pessimistic thought, with continual reference also to the Wagnerian theory of music. Two years later he published his

strikingly original essays entitled *Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*, and in his dedication frankly took his stand as a pessimist of the school of Schopenhauer, holding the justification of life to be impossible on an ethical basis, declaring that our willingness to live is quite irrational, pronouncing individuality and a longing for individual happiness to be an evil, and teaching the extinction of desire and a sympathetic altruism as the essence of all virtue. The saint, the philosopher, and the artist are three types of the virtuous man, for each has put aside his individual self, — the saint by conquering the will and destroying the animal within him by asceticism, the philosopher by losing himself in the region of pure thought, and the artist by rising above his own personality in a striving after artistic perfection.

Thus, then, the starting-point of Nietzsche's philosophical pilgrimage is found in his attitude as a disciple, a willing follower of another. So boldly original a mind, however, could never rest contented with a subordination so complete, nor with a doctrine so essentially negative and tame. Asceticism, a Buddhistic abnegation of self, a renunciation of the will

— how could these things long appeal to a brilliant, daring, creative spirit such as his, instinct as it was with wilfulness, and animated with a passion for the positive? In fact, scarcely had his essays been given to the world when his critical mind began to analyse more freely the teachings of his master and to destroy them in the solvent acid of relentless logic. His next work, *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, which appeared in 1878, contained some biting criticism of Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will. For, if the will be evil, this evil must be equally involved in the will to cease from willing. Moreover, asceticism, especially altruistic asceticism, is illogical. For altruism ceases to exist as soon as it has universally prevailed, inasmuch as self-sacrifice implies the existence of others who are willing to accept the sacrifice, — that is to say, of others who are not altruistic but purely egoistic. Hence, "in order to exist, the highest morality must enforce the existence of immorality," — a conclusion which Nietzsche justly views as self-contradictory and absurd.

Asceticism, self-abnegation, a colourless neutrality were, in fact, profoundly repug-

nant to Nietzsche's strong vitality of temperament. Hence, from having been at first the disciple of Schopenhauer and then his friendly critic, he very soon becomes an active and even virulent opponent of his former master. Through a mistaken identification of the modern Christian spirit with mediæval asceticism, he at the same time poses as the open enemy of Christianity. He had always been an atheist; yet, as we have seen, he had at one time held the saintly life to be desirable. Now, however, he makes a sweeping attack upon the whole teaching of the Church as he understands it, and ardently desires to be known as one who has abandoned God (*Wir Gottlosen*). Christianity, he says, is absolutely negative. It fights against everything that gives a joy to life, and instead of deifying and beautifying desire, it simply subjects it to castration. Its doctrine is a doctrine of extermination, and hence it attacks all life itself at the very root of its being. It does not see that all desires and all the joys of sense are in themselves not evil but profoundly good, and that a truer teaching would not destroy them but would rather spiritualise them.

Chastity and sensuality are not necessarily opposed, for every true marriage is beyond any such antithesis. The spiritualisation of sensuousness is Love; and this is a magnificent triumph over Christianity.

It is obvious that as soon as Nietzsche began to justify the vital instinct he was bound to cast aside and to reject the entire pessimistic theory of Schopenhauer; for this theory regarded life itself as wholly evil, which would in turn imply that the philosophical attitude toward life must be wholly negative and that the philosophical ideal should be self-destruction and annihilation.

Against the logical results of such a doctrine, and against the teaching from which it is primarily derived, Nietzsche wages a vigorous polemic. Yet, none the less, he still remains a pessimist; only he constructs for himself a new pessimism which he styles a "Dionysiac pessimism," whose spirit is no longer a spirit of resignation and compassion, but a spirit of fierce scorn and splendid defiance. This Dionysiac pessimism, like the other kind, equally rejects the notion that happiness is in itself an end to be pursued. It strives to make men superior alike to

happiness and to suffering, and therefore in a way displays a certain kinship with the Stoic teaching.

Here enters his ideal of the *Uebermensch.* Man, he says, begins in the beast and will ultimately attain to a noble development which will make of him a hero, almost a god, one who is superior to everything external, one who can confront affliction with strength and sternness and pride and scorn, defying principalities and powers, and attaining to a moral mastery of all things. At the present time, however, he is in an intermediate stage, a period of transition, and the human race to-day is so feeble, so cowardly, so base as to excite in illumined minds nothing but disgust. All its conventional morality, all its accepted teaching, all its moral distinctions, are erroneous and absurd; so that it is the duty of the philosopher to bring about, so far as in him lies, the reversal of all the beliefs that are now accepted. Hence, Nietzsche styles himself at last an "immoralist," and in his treatise *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), he assails with tremendous energy the traditional ethics. All sense of obligation is stupid; to feel remorse

of conscience is indecent. Morality and religion are of interest only to those who care to study the psychology of error. One must wholly cast aside these dangerous and foolish fictions and must get back once more to a primitive naturalness in which man is "a magnificent blond beast, roaming wantonly about in search of victory and prey." This is, to be sure, a step backward even according to Nietzsche's own preliminary theory; but he regards it as quite necessary in order to clear away the weakness, the sentimentalism, and the self-pity that have made the modern world decadent and degenerate. It is a step, he thinks, toward the realisation of a new ideal in which each man shall be a warrior, a creator, and a scorner.

Nietzsche professes to find in such an ethical ideal everything that makes for intellectual and physical joy. He thinks of the whole world, the whole universe, in fact, as "a dancing-floor for divine chances, a table of the gods, for godlike dice and dicers." Blind fate he calls his love. The sum and substance of it all is this: That nothing matters, and that when one has finally attained to such an attitude, he becomes inspired with an

almost delirious delight. In his curious volume entitled *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (*Also Sprach Zarathustra*) — a strange medley of irony and rhapsody — he bursts forth into a sort of dithyramb in his so-called "Song of Yea and Amen":

O heaven above me, pure and deep, thou abyss of light! Gazing at thee I shudder with divine desires. . . . We speak not one to another, because we know too much; in silence we smile our knowledge one to another. Together we learned everything; together we learned to rise above ourselves to ourselves and cloudlessly to smile. . . . I have become one who blesses and one who says yea: I struggled long till I attained this end, and was a wrestler that I might one day get my hands free to bless. And my blessing is this: to stand over everything as its own heaven, its round roof, its azure bell, and eternal security. Blessed is he who thus blesses.

Nietzsche had now ranged over the whole field of ethical speculation, darting, as it were, his mind into every nook and corner of morbid thought, and dragging to light stray bits of almost every kind of doctrine. Pessimism, optimism, scepticism, individualism, — all are laid under contribution. He seeks a physio-

logical basis for his later views and sets up a purely biological ideal. Yet he well perceived that, do what he would and strain his powers as he would, he was everywhere hemmed in by countless contradictions. He teaches pessimism, yet tries to make it a source of joy. He lays down his propositions in a spirit of intense dogmatism, yet he denies the possibility of any objective standard of knowledge whatsoever. He holds that it is absurd to require any individual to change his character or his nature, since these are but the work of fate and cannot possibly be altered, and he professes to admire the "delightful wealth of types and luxuriant prodigality of forms" which human life displays; yet almost all these types and forms he attacks with almost frantic violence.

In a word, Nietzsche was paying the penalty which is exacted from many a mind which strives to know the thing which for us with our poor human limitations must always be unknowable. His insistent reason beat furiously against the bars that hemmed it in, and it recoiled with an impotent sense of failure, bruised and beaten and exhausted. Strange, morbid thoughts began to fill his mind. There

came to him at last a dreadful fancy which he styles "the doctrine of eternal recurrence," a belief that the life of every man is to be repeated over and over in all its most minute details throughout eternity. This he has expressed with a weird and almost frightful intensity of feeling in his work *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft.*

How were it if, some day or night, a demon stole after thee into thy most solitary solitude, and said to thee: "This life, as thou livest it now, and hast lived it, thou shalt have to live over again, and not once but innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every pleasure, and every thought and sigh, and everything in all thy life, the great and the unspeakably petty alike, must come again to thee, and all in the same series and succession; this spider, too, and this moonlight betwixt the trees, and this moment likewise, and I myself. The eternal sand-glass of time is always turned again, and thou with it, thou atom of dust."

To Nietzsche the fascination of this strangely morbid thought was equalled only by its horror. He fought against it for many a day and many a sleepless night, with an agonised desire to escape its confirmation. When he first spoke of it, he did so in a

whisper, while his frame shook with spasms of nervous fear. He brooded over it and shuddered at its terror, and though he tried at last to meet it as his own *Uebermensch* might have met it, we cannot doubt that to the last its awfulness hung over his imagination like a gloomy pall. It was, indeed, quite symptomatic of a mental disorder that was growing on him every year and that was directly due to the strain which he had put upon his intellect. As early as 1879, he had begun to be so tortured by insomnia that he became unfitted for his academic functions, and was forced to resign his professorial chair. Yet he still went on with his wild speculations, goaded, as it were, by some evil spirit that blasted in him every possibility of rest and peace. His state of mind became more obvious from day to day, and his writings teemed at last with passages that were little more than ravings. Finally, in 1889, the inevitable end was reached. That fine intellect, that bold imagination, that splendid and defiant genius were hopelessly and forever wrecked and shattered, and Nietzsche was pronounced incurably insane. He lives to-day at Naumburg under the care of faithful friends, retaining but the shadow

of his former mind, while in his gibbering he makes plain the fact that of all his early traits his vanity alone survives; for he still believes himself to be the apostle of a mighty world-philosophy that is to revolutionise and re-create the future of mankind.

The simplest and most obvious lesson to be drawn from Nietzsche's life is that which has already been expressed, — the danger that exists for minds like his in their attempt to scale the heavens of speculative thought and penetrate the mysteries that none can ever know. Near-sighted souls that do not see the vastness and the terrible significance of what they ask to learn may muddle on and experience no ill. The German pedant in his musty den may fashion philosophic formulæ forever, dividing and sub-dividing and sub-subdividing to his heart's content. He crawls on earth and never knows the thrill that comes to the imaginative soul. Hard-headed Scotchmen, such as Hume and Hamilton, may go on splitting metaphysical hairs unharmed. But to those sensitive spirits of whom Nietzsche is a type, no good can come from such pursuits. The awful problems must remain unsolved, and the most strenu-

ous efforts of the mind will only in the end demonstrate once again the bankruptcy of reason.

But there is a greater and more comprehensive lesson also to be learned. Not the peril only, but the futility, of these studies may be seen in the history of Nietzsche's failure. His mind, innately powerful, and disciplined and enriched by every form of training, laboured with incessant ardour after a new truth. He thought and reasoned and exhausted ingenuity for some original explanation of the moral problem; he racked his brain and tortured his imagination and scourged his fevered faculties to mad exertion in the quest. Yet did he add one atom to the discoveries of those who went before? The contrary is true; for after he had reasoned and argued and thought and written until he had reached at last a definite result, he had not gone one single step beyond his predecessors. An able English scholar has lately pointed out with perfect truth,[1] that the supreme expression of Nietzsche's philosophic creed is nothing but an echo of the Greeks; that his ethical teaching is only that of Calli-

[1] See the Contemporary Review for May, 1898.

cles as set forth by Plato in the *Gorgias*, and that his whole theory of knowledge is almost verbally to be identified with the notions of Protagoras as combated in the *Theætetus*. There is something in all this that is most terribly pathetic — this wrecking of a splendid intellect for the sake of painfully establishing as something new a thesis that was first laid down two thousand years ago. Yet this is just as true of all those modern thinkers who are treading in the path that was worn smooth by other feet before our civilisation had been born. For there is really nothing new in modern thought. It has only sublimated and refined and enlarged and expanded what was handed down to it from a remote antiquity, while its essential teachings are older than the hills. The materialist of to-day has, in his main conclusions, not gone a step beyond Lucretius and Democritus. The sceptic merely echoes what was said as forcibly by Pyrrho and the Eleatic Zeno. The pessimist is parroting the arguments of Hegesias. The germ of every modern speculative system is discernible in Plato and his mighty pupil. The mind of man, in fact, exhausted all the possibilities of philosophic thought some

twenty centuries ago, and since then human ingenuity has formulated nothing new. Everything has been thought, everything has been written; and it is all *Mayâ* — beginning nowhere and ending in a fog.

Unthinking persons sometimes speak of mere "blind faith." But in the sphere of things like these, it is rather Reason, unguided and uncontrolled, that is really smitten with eternal blindness, — that gropes and stumbles, and that after toiling painfully over many a weary path, finds itself fainting and exhausted at the very place from which it started; while Faith alone, whose undimmed eyes have been divinely opened, sees clearly down the endless vista of eternity. Reason falters, but Faith is sure. Reason becomes at last impoverished, but Faith grows richer with the lapse of time. Reason sickens and falls fainting by the way, but Faith goes on serenely to the end.

There is need of Faith to-day in philosophy and in religion, two spheres which in the highest sense are one; for in the end it is Faith alone that satisfies the needs of every human soul. It is here that we can find the secret of the wonderful power of Catholicism,

— that it has learned and thoroughly assimilated this great fundamental truth which Protestantism seems unable to acquire, so that there come to us the warring of unnumbered sects and controversial clamour without end between those, on the one hand, who would make religious truth turn on the pointing of a Hebrew text in some ink-smeared palimpsest; and those who, on the other hand, imagine that salvation is to be secured by setting up sporadic soup-kitchens and by stocking missionary homes with parti-coloured pen-wipers.

But he who wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and who has found in reason but a treacherous guide, needs something higher, deeper, richer, and more spiritual far than this. Struggling onward through the storm and night, repelled and driven further by the cold, chill formalism that looks out on him superciliously from its grated windows, he plunges with a growing terror into a still deeper darkness, following perhaps the fitful lead of Atheism that with ghastly grin beckons him onward when he shrinks back shuddering at the chasm's brink where yawn abysmal deeps of infinite despair; until at

last, beyond the beating of the storm and the gloom of an unfathomable darkness, he sees the House of Faith, serenely radiant with light, filled with the sound of melodious music, and opening wide its gates to shelter and defend, and to diffuse through all the depths of his poor shaken soul the peace, the comfort, and the divinely perfect beauty of an endless benediction.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

Robert G. Ingersoll

FOR more than twenty years the name of Robert Ingersoll has been known to all his countrymen. On the day when, in the Republican Convention of 1876, he rose to urge the nomination of Mr. Blaine for the Presidency of the United States, his reputation ceased to be a merely local one, and in a short half-hour had become distinctly national. That Convention was almost the last of the really great conventions of our history, and it was an occasion to stimulate to supreme activity the latent powers of everyone who shared in its exciting scenes. The battle fought there was a battle destined again and again to be renewed in after years — a battle, indeed, that never truly ended until the most brilliant figure of our later politics had been removed by death. Here was the real beginning of a contest which centred in the political fortunes of an individual, and its profoundest lesson is that which teaches us

the extraordinary power of personality. The strife went on with scarce a lull for seventeen long years; it coloured the entire political history of that eventful period; it divided and at last defeated a party whose record of victories had been unbroken for a quarter of a century; and hence, as its ultimate result, it swept away forever the issues and the interests that had dominated American public life since the outbreak of the Civil War.

The Convention of 1876 was in all its phases one of an intensely dramatic interest. For the first time since 1864, the leaders of the Republican party admitted to themselves the possibility of disaster at the polls. The revolt against Grant in 1872, although the ineptitude of those who led it made its actual outcome seem abortive and ridiculous, was none the less a sinister and ominous event. It revealed the presence of a serious discontent within the party ranks, and it showed that some of the ablest leaders were beginning to grow restive under the conditions that existed. It proved, moreover, that the familiar party cries had lost much of their effectiveness, and that the living questions of the day were growing more and more insistent.

Hence the choice of a leader by the Convention was a matter of most serious moment; for at last the time had come when a nomination by no means, as in the recent past, could be regarded as assuring the certainty of election.

Again, the character of the men who met there to deliberate and of the men whose interests were represented gave to the proceedings a serious dignity such as has been sadly missing in the conventions of the past decade. Among those who were most before the minds of the assembled delegates, there were some of a really national renown. The astute and wary Sherman, the urbane and eloquent Garfield, the arrogant but powerful Conkling, and Bristow, whose unflinching honesty of purpose made him appear to many an ideal candidate after the political debauchery which had tainted the administration of President Grant, — theirs were but a few of the names that were continually spoken; while in the background, with no official recognition from the apprehensive party managers, but forever present to their nervous fancy, loomed up the portentous possibility of a demand for Grant — a demand in

violation of political traditions and fraught with utter ruin to the party, yet one which might at any time be thrust upon the gathering by those reckless delegates whom the administration leaders held in the hollow of their hands.

Yet it was in the personal and political fortunes of Mr. Blaine that the chief interest of the Convention centred. For the first time, that able, impetuous, and resourceful leader appeared to have secured an opportunity to seize the undisputed guidance of his party, and, as a result, the headship of the nation. In the very prime of his powers, with a reputation for audacity that had been gaining him admirers for the ten preceding years, gifted with a ready eloquence that could at will be tactfully adapted either to the halls of legislation or to great popular assemblies, and possessing also a personal fascination that bound men to him by an almost passionate devotion, at last the hour seemed near when the ambition of his life might readily be gratified. He had secured, in advance of the Convention's meeting, a plurality of all the delegates, and there appeared to be good reasons for believing that the contagious

enthusiasm of his followers might readily convert this plurality into a majority. For the delegates who came to give their acclamations and their votes to Mr. Blaine had most certainly not come there in the spirit of men who are to discharge a perfunctory and usual duty in a perfunctory and usual way. They were there because their very hearts and souls were bound up in their leader, because they loved him and admired him beyond expression, because he had inspired them with that intense devotion which in other days and by other men had been given to Henry Clay. His cause was theirs; his triumph also would be theirs. It was the beginning of a long struggle that was destined to reach a melancholy end; but none of them as yet foresaw that end; there had been as yet no check, no disappointment, no prevision of disaster; so that to the sublime enthusiasm which they never lost, there was added a splendid confidence, a magnificent hopefulness, which in itself seemed almost to command success.

It was, therefore, no purely formal duty that was to be discharged when, in the midst of that great hall, and surrounded by a vast assemblage whose tumultuous shouts were

stilled at once in a deathlike silence, Colonel Ingersoll arose to bring officially before the delegates the name of James G. Blaine. The moment was historic; the issues were profoundly vital and far-reaching; the prize at stake was the greatest for which Americans contend; and before the orator had uttered half a dozen sentences it was felt instinctively by all that he had risen with consummate ease and perfect power to the full height of his opportunity.

Convention oratory is not to be tested by the standard that we apply to the eloquence of Demosthenes or Pitt or Webster. It is essentially rhetorical; it is an appeal to the emotions, to sentiment, to pride, to loyalty, to prejudice; it is not directed to the intellectual faculties at all. Yet, in its way, it may still be fine and worthy of an intelligent admiration even when read over afterward in cold blood and without the thrilling accompaniment of the incarnate passion that pierces its spoken words with fire, and follows them with the tempestuous thunders of a sublimely mad enthusiasm. All oratory, in the end, is most fairly judged by its adaptation to the circumstances of its utterance; and from this

standpoint Colonel Ingersoll's short speech was almost perfect of its kind. It was pure rhetoric; yet it was that sublimated rhetoric which is not elaborated in the closet, but which gets its potency from the swift inspiration of the moment; and which is charged with electricity, with human feeling, with elemental passion. It was the rhetoric of Corwin and not the rhetoric of Everett.

I have dwelt thus fully upon a single incident of Colonel Ingersoll's career, not because it was in itself and by itself especially significant; for other men have made as apt and quite as eloquent addresses; but because in his case it was important in relation to his subsequent career. It was by this nominating speech that he first became well known to the American people; and in the Presidential campaign that followed, his services as a speaker on the stump materially added to his reputation. That is to say, it was as Ingersoll the political orator and not as Ingersoll the militant agnostic that men first learned to think of him. And this, as I have said, was most important, since otherwise he never would have gained the hearing which he afterward secured for his polemical addresses

on the subject of religion. Had he in the first place sought for widespread recognition as an opponent of Christianity and of revealed religion, he would, no doubt, have gathered audiences; yet they would not have been precisely the same kind of audiences, nor would his gifts of rhetoric, his wit, and his audacity have secured the serious consideration that was long accorded to him. But, as it happened, the whole country had eagerly acclaimed him in his political capacity before it had had a chance to see and hear him in his rôle of theological iconoclast. And this made all the difference in the world. Those who had eagerly drunk in his eloquence as a political advocate could not refuse to take him seriously as a controversialist; those who followed him as a guide in matters of the State felt bound to give him at least a hearing on the other topics that he chose to speak upon. Hence it came about that instead of declaiming to the sort of audiences that usually gather to applaud the wonted peripatetic infidel — a crowd of illiterate or half-educated men, of long-haired agitators and obscene fanatics — Colonel Ingersoll delivered his attacks on Christianity before audiences

made up in part, at least, of intelligent, serious-minded, influential men and women. The political partisan had won a hearing for the professional atheist.

It is, indeed, as a professional atheist that Colonel Ingersoll is destined to be now remembered. The political fortunes of Mr. Blaine to which he had at first attached himself were shipwrecked in the cataclysm of 1884; and it is even said that between the two men there finally arose a coolness verging on dislike. Moreover, Colonel Ingersoll, in spite of his first strikingly dramatic effort, never added to his reputation as a political orator; of late years he let that reputation slowly die. As a jury lawyer his services were always in request, yet he never stood out in conspicuous pre-eminence above the other members of the legal profession. It was, in the end, entirely as an agnostic and as a public opponent of all Christian teaching that men came to think of him; and hence it is only in this aspect of his career that his life and influence demand of us a careful estimate.

Now, in forming such an estimate we may at once ignore as foreign to our purpose certain facts that were minutely dwelt upon in

the notices called forth by his sudden death. For instance, the question of his private character can have no possible importance here. One is glad to believe that in all the relations of domestic life and in his various dealings as a man with men, he was a model of benevolence, of kindness, of integrity, of honour. No one has questioned this; and even had it been so questioned, the fact could not be pertinent to our discussion. Indeed, it is not easy to perceive just why his private virtues have been so breathlessly brought forward and detailed with so much strenuous insistence; for surely husbands who are faithful, fathers who are loving, and friends who are generous and sympathetic, are not so rare in this our world as to make of them phenomena to be noted in the annals of the age. These facts, at any rate, concern his friends and family alone, and can have no bearing on the broader question that is now before us.

Nor is it worth one's while to take into account the soundness or the reasonableness of the views he advocated. His opinions, merely as opinions, do not concern us. That he had no positive belief in any form of religious faith, that he found no reason for ac-

cepting the existence of a God, that he viewed the Christian Church as nothing but the relic of a waning superstition, that he held the Bible to be a mere collection of incongruous myths, that he rejected with contempt and derision the Deity whom other men adore, and that to him the faith which has survived through all the centuries alike the shock of persecution and the corroding power of time, seemed but a tribute to the power of priestly imposture and the weak credulity of unthinking men — all these things can have no place in our discussion. To touch upon the truth or the falsity of his opinions would be only to lose sight of our main purpose and to become involved in the bewildering labyrinth of theological debate. His doubt and his unbelief were honest doubt and honest unbelief, and as such they are entitled to the same respect that we accord to the unshaken faith of other men. Indeed, for the purpose of the moment, we may even go still further and assume that he was right, that Christianity is in truth a superstition, and its history a fable; that it has no hold on reason; and that the book from which it draws in part its teaching and its inspiration is only an inconsistent

chronicle of old-world myths. Let us assume all this, and let us still inquire what final judgment should be passed upon the man who held these views and strove so hard to make them universal. Of course, from the theological standpoint there will always be two judgments — one the condemnatory judgment of the orthodox believer, and the other the approving judgment of the consistent skeptic; but if the teaching and the influence of Colonel Ingersoll be dispassionately viewed upon their purely social, human side, there can be, I am certain, but a single verdict.

The first consideration that we call to mind is not, perhaps, one of the gravest moment, yet still it cannot possibly be overlooked. Colonel Ingersoll did not believe in any of the doctrines that make up the creed of Christian men, and he appeared to think it something like a duty to extend his unbelief to others. He knew that the vast majority of enlightened men and women cherished the very faith that he attacked. He knew, though he often affected to ignore the fact, that a strong belief in revealed religion is not the special attribute of doddering old men and of intellectual weaklings, of dotards and of

simpletons, but that it is a moving force with thousands of those who were superior to him alike in mind and training. For Colonel Ingersoll was in no respect a thinker. He had received a good professional training; he had read a reasonable amount of standard literature; and he possessed the oratorical temperament, with a liberal fund of wit and racy humour. But that was all. He had none of the scholar's thoroughness and the scholar's sobriety of thought. His controversial addresses when stripped of all their rhetoric, their pungent phraseology, and their often rather offensive jokes, exhibit absolutely nothing that had not been advanced a hundred years before Colonel Ingersoll was born. His criticisms on the Bible were mainly taken from the writings of Thomas Paine; his "arguments" against the truth of revelation have been the common property of infidels for centuries. He added nothing whatsoever to the literature of the subject, nor to the strength of the agnostic position. All that can be styled his own is to be found in the bits of declamation, the flights of rhetoric, the neatness of expression, and also in the gibes and jeers, the ludicrous similes, the

irreverent stories, and the pointed jests with which the old material was seasoned and made for the moment to appear original and startling. In his religious controversies, as in his political controversies, Colonel Ingersoll was at the most a glorified stump-speaker — precisely the sort of person to please the fancy and tickle the ears of a miscellaneous crowd, but with nothing in his utterances to convince or seriously concern a thoughtful man. It is, indeed (and this is the first point that I wish to make), the very manner of his polemical addresses that must lead an impartial critic to condemn him. He attacked religious faith in precisely the same spirit and in precisely the same free and easy manner that he showed in attacking what he regarded as a political error. Yet political opinions and religious faith are very different things, and they appeal in very different ways to those who hold them. A political tenet is ephemeral; it is subject to modification, to change, to abandonment altogether. It takes no hold upon one's deeper nature. It is like the clothes one wears or the fashion one adopts. Its nature is utilitarian or, at the utmost, intellectual. Religious faith, on the other hand,

is first of all a strong conviction that is above and beyond mere reason and expediency. Its roots strike down into the very depths of human consciousness. They touch the heart, the sympathies, and the emotions. They lay strong hold on life itself, and they are the chords to which all being can be made to vibrate with a passionate intensity which nothing else can call to life. For his political belief a man will give his time, his money, and the labour of his brain and hands; but for his religious faith he will lay down his life. And this is so, because religion is not the handmaid of one's casual hours — a thing that one takes up and looks at superciliously and only half adopts. Its sway begins for most of us with consciousness itself; its memories go back to earliest childhood; it is as fundamental as the thought of home, of family, of country; and, as the years go by, each one as it departs gives to that faith a deeper meaning, in linking it with all the mysteries of life and death, of joy, of hope, of loss, of sorrow, and of consolation. The faith of a believer, then, is not a part of his material life alone; it is the sanctuary of his soul, and is redolent of all that is sacred and intimate and tender.

And this is why one could not pardon Colonel Ingersoll for the manner of his propaganda, even did we share his unbelief. The religion that he mocked, the ancient faith on which he cracked his jokes, the Book over whose marvellous pages he was wont to utter loud guffaws, were to many millions the most precious, the most wonderful, and the most beautiful possession of their lives, the source of all that was good and spiritual in them, a refuge in distress, a comfort in adversity, a guide and an inspiration through their whole existence here on earth. Now, if Colonel Ingersoll honestly and conscientiously believed that it was his duty to shake their faith, to refute their error, and to tear from them a belief that he supposed a false one, then at the very least he should have respected the sincerity of their convictions, and have laid his hand upon them gently and with reverence, and not burst into the sacred silence of their devotion with the raucous bellowing of an itinerant stump-speaker and the clowning of a vulgar mountebank.

A phrase of Mr. Gladstone here suggests a fitting parallel. If one of us possessed a dear and intimate friend whom he had known

from childhood up, so that he held his honour as his own, and if he had become convinced that the wife of such a friend was unfaithful and unchaste, he might, perhaps, by virtue of his friendship, deem it finally his duty to disclose what he had learned, in order that his friend might cease to be deceived, and to be covered with dishonour. He might, I say, feel this to be his duty; but if he did so, how would he begin the revelation? Would he not speak with hesitation and regret, and in the most reserved and careful language, with all the delicacy of phrase and feeling at his command, and with the most sensitive unwillingness to give unnecessary pain? Or would he slap his friend upon the back and tell the story with a snicker, in the coarsest language of the brothel and interspersed with Rabelaisian jokes? To those who hold the faith in all sincerity, religion is if anything more sacred even than the home; yet Colonel Ingersoll preferred to make his public utterances against it in this very spirit—the spirit of one who lacked the finest instincts of a high-bred gentleman, and who, if indeed he felt that he was acting in the line of duty, did so in the character of a paid public entertainer

for his own personal profit, feeling pleased and proud if he could evoke over the most solemn of all themes the heehaws of a rabble.

Colonel Ingersoll, then, may very fairly be condemned for the method and the manner in which he chose to perform what he professed to think a duty. But we approach a far more vital part of the discussion when we come to ask how far he was justified in dignifying his performance by the name of duty. The man who holds a positive belief, who thinks that there has been revealed to him a great and glorious truth, who honestly regards himself as being in possession of a doctrine whose acceptance will increase the happiness and the contentment of his fellow-men, may well invoke the name of duty. But one who holds to nothing positive, who only can destroy, and who has naught to give — what obligation, save that of a sorrowful silence, rests on him? What honour is there for the champion of pure negation? Let us look at this question from the standpoint of Colonel Ingersoll himself. If death ends all, if the hope of immortality is a delusion, and if there is no richer, fuller, and more glorious existence possible beyond the grave, then this

life here on earth is all we have to live, and our one concern must be to fill it full of happiness. We owe no duty to the future; the present is the only thing of which we can be certain; we must in every way seek after what will make that present more delightful; we must not cast away one single element that makes for peace and pleasure and contentment. But if a thinking man holds this to be the truth, and if he looks about him and discerns the life of men and women as it is, he will at once perceive that to millions upon millions of them it is the Christian faith and the Christian hope that bring the largest share of such contentment as they have. The unquestioning believer never feels the loneliness of isolation; he never lacks the comfort that arises from immortal hope; in sickness and in sorrow and at the very gates of death his faith supports him as by an invisible hand within his own; while beyond the darkness of the fleeting moment there is always seen the golden glimmer of that eternal promise on which his soul relies forever. Grant, if you will, that he is wrong, that his belief is a delusion, that he is buoyed up by unrealities; and still it is not easy to explain

just why it is one's duty to destroy his faith, to quench for him the light, to cast him shuddering into darkness and despair, to rob him of his only source of consolation. For if this life on earth be all of life, then who shall dare to say that duty bids the utterance of a single word to make it barer, blacker, and more dreadful to endure? So far from doing this, the unbeliever who is animated by a true benevolence should hide his unbelief and keep it as a fearful secret; for in the preaching of it to the destruction of that faith which gives serenity and happiness, there is something little less than devilish.

Grant also, if you will, that all the doctrines of revealed religion are without authority; yet who can fail to see that the life which they inculcate is the purest, noblest, most self-sacrificing life that men can live? Mercy and truth and honour and chastity and justice all find their most sublime expression in the Book which the believer reverences. How can it be the duty of a wise, far-seeing man to foul with mockery and cynical contempt the source of such a wondrous influence for good? What have you

gained when you have taught the simple-minded man to look with doubt and serious mistrust upon the volume whence from childhood he has drawn the inspiration of an upright, honest, honourable life? Will you supply an ethical system of your own? This you may try to do, just as did Colonel Ingersoll; for he often put forth generalities on the value of good works and of good will toward men; yet when you have succeeded in destroying that belief which gives vitality to moral teaching, it is never easy to build up a substitute; and if men begin to find it difficult to accept the doctrine of an omniscient Deity, they will find it quite as difficult to pin their faith to an omniscient Ingersoll. And so, whether we regard it as a question of mere worldly happiness or whether we prefer to think of it upon its purely moral side, there is only one conclusion to be fairly drawn. Let him who cannot honestly believe hold to his doubt or to his unbelief: yet if he speaks one word to shake the faith of others, then he assumes a terrible responsibility; for he is destroying that in place of which he can have absolutely nothing to bestow. The feeling which ani-

mates the sincere and high-minded man who doubts is, I think, most finely and faithfully expressed in the well-known lines of Matthew Arnold:

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee and to right thee if thou roam —
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou makest the heaven thou hopest indeed thy home.

Robert Ingersoll is dead. Death came to him with swiftness and without a warning. Whether he was even conscious of his end no man can say. It may be that before the spark grew quite extinct there was for him a moment of perception — that one appalling moment when within a space of time too brief for human computation the affrighted mind, as it reels upon the brink of dissolution, flashes its vivid thought through all the years of its existence and perceives the final meaning of them all. If such a moment came to him, and if as the light of day grew dim before his dying eyes, his mind looked backward through the past, there can have been small consolation in the thought that in all

the utterances of his public teaching and in all the phrases of his fervid eloquence there was nothing that could help to make the life of man on earth more noble or more spiritual or more truly worth the living.

A GREAT NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

A Great National Newspaper

NOT very long ago there was held in New York City a private gathering of gentlemen who came together to discuss a proposal to establish there a newspaper that should satisfy a need that is beginning to be recognised in contemporary American life. This gathering was attended by men of wholly different occupations and interests, by men well known in literature, in politics, and in finance; and it represented very fairly real eminence in our intellectual and national life. The newspapers did not, so far as I have observed, take any notice of this gathering. Perhaps they did not hear of it; perhaps, for reasons that are sufficiently obvious, they deemed it wiser to ignore it. For, while very diverse opinions were represented at the conference, upon one thing, at least, all the persons present were in entire accord. They all believed most earnestly that in spite of the excellence and ability and enterprise of our

existing journals, there is not one of them that can be considered truly representative of the soundest and sanest public opinion, or that in the highest sense deserves to be regarded as broadly national.

The fact that such a conference was held and that such an opinion as has just been mentioned was the cause of it, is very interesting. One often listens to a general discussion of the methods and the influence of American journalism; but all such discussion usually relates to particular details alone, and does not take a very comprehensive range. Yet because the American newspaper, such as it is, has always played a most conspicuous part in our social and political life, the consideration of some leading questions with regard to it affords a very fruitful and fascinating theme. Are the best of our American journals worthy of the place they hold in the popular attention? Are they as good as they can be under the conditions that actually exist? Is there any real place for a great newspaper conducted upon very different lines? And would the establishment of such a journal be found professionally and financially successful?

Perhaps the simplest way of looking at the

subject is to consider, in the first place, the nature of the criticism that has been so very lavishly bestowed upon the American press by native as well as by foreign readers, and then to see how far these strictures are in reality deserved; to which may be appended some further criticism that is much less generally heard, although it is quite as pertinent. It will then be possible to set forth the reasons, if such exist, for thinking that the defects of our newspapers are so generally and seriously felt as to create a large constituency for a journal that shall be wholly free from these defects.

The most frequent and, in a way, the most serious criticism is that which has to do with an alleged lack of accuracy in the information which our journals give. And this is a particularly serious criticism, inasmuch as the professed and principal function of the daily press is to give the news, to record facts, to enlighten, to inform; and if, through carelessness or incompetency or dishonesty, the facts are garbled, and if information is given that is either mainly or wholly false, it is obvious that the newspaper is untrue to the principle to which it owes its origin and to which it is always careful to profess a most sincere de-

votion. At first sight there is much to justify this very grave and very sweeping charge. One can easily prepare from a reading of the daily journals a formidable list, not only of minor inaccuracies in matters of detail, but of glaring errors in the reports of important events; and not infrequently, also, can one cite the publication of gross falsehoods that are actually invented by unscrupulous journalists and allowed by equally unscrupulous editors to pass without correction or denial. It is rather unusual, indeed, to find a newspaper narrative of any length that is absolutely accurate. Almost invariably names are garbled, individuals are mentioned as being in some way connected with the event described who had no knowledge of it until they read it in the press; and misrepresentation is very often seen to arise from the omission of essential circumstances which, if known, would make the meaning of the facts reported very different. And as to graver errors, everybody knows how of late years the journalistic "fake" has grown and prospered. It is not merely that rumours and the most irresponsible gossip are treated as being absolutely true, and are published broadcast with all sorts of

circumstantial detail; but deliberate fictions also are rushed into print and never contradicted. Nor are these always the reckless work of cheaply paid subordinates who are writing at "space rates." They are sometimes produced by men whose position and reputation ought to save them from even the suspicion of such a thing.

Much of what is given to the public by a newspaper's "special commissioners" is always to be regarded with suspicion, as is also the journalistic "interview." There is hardly any one who does not personally know how little reliance is to be placed in these. Some years ago, for instance, I was surprised to read in one of the New York newspapers a fairly long account of a conversation that I was supposed to have had with a reporter in relation to a particularly distressing case of suicide that had lately shocked the whole community. I was made to describe the personality of the deceased, to give some conjectures as to the motive that had actuated him, and to express in very feeling language a sense of profound regret for his loss as for that of an intimate friend. But as a matter of fact, no reporter had ever spoken

to me upon the subject, nor had I the slightest personal acquaintance with the individual whose death had given this particular journalist an opportunity for exercising his inventiveness. Almost every one at some time or other has had a similar experience.

In the same class of charges is the favourite charge of "sensationalism." The American newspaper, they say, is every day in the year straining and striving to discover something that will shock and startle. Murders, prize fights, criminal trials, and divorce suits that have actually occurred are not the only resource of the journalistic sensationmonger. When these are lacking in contemporary chronicles, the modern American editor sends out his myrmidons to create material for the necessary "copy." One paper will order a young woman to walk up and down the streets at night in order to recount in the next Sunday's edition how many times she has been insulted by passing men. Another young woman will be directed to feign insanity in order to get into a lunatic asylum and "write it up." Another will enrol herself in a matrimonial agency for a similar purpose. A reporter will be ordered to don the costume

of a diver and actually go down into the depths of the sea, or to travel around the world against time, or to visit usurers and endeavour to raise loans, or to try to bribe legislators, to eavesdrop at council-chambers, or to do all sorts of curious and unpleasant things, in the everlasting search for something new. And events that are by no means singular or unusual will be treated by the journals as though they were. Weddings, dinners, balls, and other social functions will be described under "scare-heads" and in the language of a circus-poster; and crudely drawn pictures of these occurrences will strike real terror into the hearts of the individuals who are thus incidentally and quite unwillingly portrayed. And it is asserted also, with a liberal citation of contemporary instances, that this craving for excitement leads to an exploitation of the morbid and even of the indecent, — that the most ghastly pathological details of the hospitals and dissecting-rooms are worked up and "featured," that disease and death are turned into "copy," that scandal and sin and the moral sewage of human life are all poured into the columns of the American press, so that its pages have become as unfit for the

perusal of women and children as are the Newgate Calendar and the adventures of Casanova.

A morbid craving for personalities is made the subject of another charge. How any prominent individual spends his time, what he eats and drinks, where his wife gets her gowns, the gossip of his servants and the daily life of his children — all these things are blazoned forth in a million printed sheets for every one to goggle over greedily. If he is engaged with those purely personal affairs in which every man has a natural right to privacy, he is none the less continually beset by a swarm of hard-eyed, unsparing inquisitors, all eager to note down the smallest possible details, with such comment as can add whatever is lacking in the facts themselves. It is recalled, for instance, how, when President Cleveland was married and took his bride to a quiet cottage in the mountains, he could find no way of obtaining even an hour's protection from intrusive curiosity but by stationing armed sentinels at the gateway of the lodge. Hence it is asserted and has become a sort of commonplace that in lack of reserve, in morbid vulgarity, and in una-

bashed effrontery there has never been so shocking a development as that which the American press, even in its most conspicuous representatives, not only tolerates but commends.

These are severe indictments. It is a subject for consideration whether they are to any serious extent quite true, and also whether they are specifically American.

The first, which relates to an alleged inaccuracy and even to an intentional falsification of the news, is very certainly not justified when looked at in a fair and reasonable way. And one can say this in spite of all that is urged to the contrary, and in spite, too, of the swarm of sporadic instances that could be cited by an *advocatus diaboli.* Just consider for a moment the facts as they confront us *a priori.* A great newspaper is one of the most gigantic, most highly systematised and most elaborate organisations that can be found in our modern life. It has millions of capital invested in it. It has at its disposal what is in reality a highly trained army, officered with ability, industry, executive talent, energy, and enthusiasm. It commands the services of scores of intrepid, tireless, in-

domitable men who are inspired by the marvellous devotion to their calling which is one of the strangest phases of our journalism, — men who will face hardship and privation, and even disease and death, for the glory of that impersonal thing which they have made it their profession to serve. The reporter, the newspaper correspondent, is one of the few heroes whom the commonplace routine of modern life has still permitted to survive. In plague and pestilence, when the bravest men shrink back and when even the physician goes about his task with a blanched and haggard face, there will be seen the reporter, noting calmly the onward march of death. In the heart of the desert, in the savage silence of the tropical jungle, where a Livingstone or an Emin is sickening with despair at his hopeless isolation, a journalist will seek him out and nonchalantly greet him. In the thick of battle, when bullets are singing like hailstones in the air, and when the commanders themselves are snugly ensconced over their telegraphic instruments in some sheltered spot a league away, the newspaper correspondent will sit his horse in sublime unconsciousness of danger, as he jots down upon

his writing-pad the fate of armies and the varying tide of war. The modern journal sends its ambassadors to foreign countries, and maintains them there at salaries which many diplomatic chiefs might envy. It enrols statesmen, and even kings, and princes, among those who feed its columns; and it has its finger on the pulse of every centre of civilisation throughout the world. It pours out money like water, demanding special railway service, chartering steamers, and netting the depths of ocean with its cables. And what, pray, is the first and foremost object of all this organisation, all this energy and effort, all this enormous expenditure of life and thought and money? To get the news,—to miss nothing that happens each hour of the day all over the habitable globe. Now, on the face of it, would shrewd, clear-sighted men, after lavishing all these wonderful resources for one particular end, be satisfied with a half achievement? Would they knowingly corrupt and render worthless the fruit of all this labour? Would they accept complacently what is valueless and false, when they have given life and brain and wealth to get that which is accurate and true? Men

do not risk their time and money and their very lives in search of diamonds, to sit down with bland contentment before a lot of gems all flawed and valueless. A great merchant will not send his agents into every country of the earth with an unlimited commission to stock his warehouses with the choicest products of all lands, and then accept from them consignments of goods that are damaged or defective. To state the proposition is to show its crass absurdity. And, as a matter of fact, the desire for accuracy is, in the staff of any reputable newspaper, as intense as is the desire for the news itself. No reporter who makes serious mistakes can hold his place. No correspondent would be tolerated who should many times supply false information.

But how about the numerous inaccuracies and falsehoods that do nevertheless continually appear in the daily press? So far as these are less than vital, the truth is simply this. The American newspaper has the defects of its qualities. It must get together in a few hours the information for which the readers of a foreign journal are content to wait as many days. A reporter hastens to

the scene of some remarkable occurrence. He examines the ground, he questions the witnesses, he sees the documents if there are any; he finds out what he can in the hurry and confusion of the moment, and then perhaps in another hour he is telegraphing a connected and intelligible account of the whole affair, or he is hurrying back to the office, very likely noting down his story on a scrap of paper by the light of a flickering oil lamp in a jolting train, — himself worn out with excitement, hungry, haggard from want of sleep, and overcome with bodily and mental fatigue. His report appears before daylight the next morning. It is a good and faithful narrative. The reader of the paper learns the essential facts as they occurred, and often finds them told in a vivid, clear-cut way that is a model of concise and picturesque description. Then what does it really matter if in the course of the story Mr. James P. Smith is spoken of as Mr. James B. Smith, or if the event is said to have happened on the northeast instead of on the southeast corner of such and such a street? The central facts are there, and it is with the central facts alone that, as a general rule, the average reader is concerned.

In truth, it is most wonderful how from a chaotic mass of desultory information drawn from confused or ignorant or unwilling witnesses, the trained reporter will extract the essential verities, shrewdly allowing for the personal bias of his informants, and skilfully compacting the whole into an intelligent and a consistent narrative.

It will be found, then, that the importance of the charge of inaccuracy and falsehood largely disappears upon examination. But how about the "fakes," the bogus interviews, the invented story? Only this, that they belong to the pages of those journals which are in no sense representative or reputable, but which exist to discredit the faithful, earnest effort of the honourable journalist. Every profession has its charlatans and rogues. The ecclesiastical profession has its hypocrites, the legal profession its shysters, the medical profession its abortionists and quacks. And so the profession of journalism, which is followed in the main by men of exceptional ability, intelligence, and integrity, has its low hangers-on who violate its honourable traditions and, in the minds of many undiscriminating persons, bring it into a certain general disrepute.

The charge of sensationalism is at first sight very strongly supported by the facts; yet a careful examination of our ablest journals will show that this sensationalism exists in appearance much more than in reality. A casual glance at an American paper will undoubtedly startle an Englishman or a Frenchman who sees it for the first time. Huge capital letters surmount the columns; exclamation points are sprinkled lavishly about; the clamorous adjective riots wildly through it all. But this is largely a mere thundering in the index. The actual reports themselves, to which these verbal gong-beatings are an introduction, are by no means very startling or exaggerated. Making allowances for our national freedom of manner, and for a certain humorous irreverence and lack of *gêne*, they are as rational, as well written, and as satisfactory as the pompously solemn chronicle of the British journalist, and a great deal more picturesque. And this is not merely the individual opinion of an American who has read the American newspapers all his life. The same thing was stated last year by a very acute and experienced British critic, Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, who came to the

reading of our journals with all the preconceived prejudice of a foreigner who had known of the American press only from furibund descriptions such as are found in Dickens and other English writers, but who very soon perceived and frankly stated his conviction that the charge of undue sensationalism has no material foundation. And he cited in support of his view a New York journal, which even by Americans is regarded as extreme in its methods, but which impressed Dr. Nicoll as being in reality a very admirable example of enterprise and zeal. As to the imputation of indecency, this is absolutely false; since for reserve and discretion in its reports of the unsavoury, our American press may fearlessly sustain a comparison not only with the French and the German periodicals, but with those of England also. It is safe to say that no American newspaper, no matter what its standing, would have ventured to print in full the revolting details of such *causes célèbres* as the Colin Campbell case, the Dilke scandal and the Russell suit, all of which were minutely reported in the London journals, including even (and especially) the *Times*. When Mr. Stead, that apostle of

British middle-class respectability and smugness, printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* his "Modern Babylon" exposures, only one American newspaper gave anything like an exhaustive summary of these articles; and even by this one a great deal of the loathsomeness of the original publication was suppressed as being quite impossible. Last winter there took place in New York a private dinner party some of whose features brought about the intervention of the police. The headlines with which the newspapers spoke of the occurrence seemed to promise revelations as startling as those of the Pompeian frescoes and the pages of Petronius; yet the actual reports were so reticent, and they suppressed so much, that unless one supplemented his reading with the private gossip of the clubs, he really could not get an intelligent understanding of what had actually taken place.

The charge of an excess of personal gossip is thoroughly well founded, as everybody knows; yet there is much to be said to modify the censure that is so freely vented on this feature of American journalism. In the first place, it is not only unfair, but

utterly absurd, to draw any parallel here between American and foreign journals. Our American life is so much more open, so much less hedged in by formality and reticence, so much freer and franker, as to make any such comparison absolutely misleading. As a people we live far more in public and take a much livelier interest in one another than is the case with Europeans. The difference between foreign and American life in this respect is admirably typified in the difference between the foreign and the American hotel. The former is built around an inner court with a plain and uninviting exterior. Its door is guarded by flunkies in uniform, who allow no one to pass who is not an actual or intending guest of the house, and even these are sometimes stopped and questioned. The American hotel is everybody's rendezvous. Its halls and parlours are the public's. Its resources, from the stationery to the lavatories, are open and free to all. And this is a part of our localism, and also of our truer humanity and of a certain friendliness which is a national characteristic. Historically, it is perhaps to be traced to the influence of village life, of that

not so very distant time when even our important cities were, after all, only small communities in which everybody knew everybody else and felt a lively interest in what his neighbours did. The era of the sewing society, of the church festival, of the spelling bee, and of the barn-raising has departed, but its influence still lingers in the popular curiosity and eagerness for personal intelligence. In fact, just as the native Roman drama was developed out of the horse-play of the country bumpkins in the outlying districts, so one may regard the personal side of our journalism as a direct inheritance from the Saturday evening gatherings in the village "store," where all the gossip of the neighbourhood was duly threshed out with comment and abundant criticism, and where the country smarty was the historical prototype of the professional "funny man" of the modern newspaper. It takes an American of native birth to appreciate all this, and to judge of the personalities of our press in the proper spirit, noting how, in the main, these are not unkindly, and how even the frequent satire has a touch of fondness in it that is subtly characteristic of the best-natured people

in the world, — of a people who clip the names of even their chief magistrates into "Abe" and "Lyss" and "Ben" and "Bill," yet who do it with something of the pride and lurking tenderness that exist in the familiar intercourse of those who are brothers and close friends. To the foreigner and to the denationalised native there is something offensive in this half jocose, half serious freedom of manner; but it does not greatly trouble the American of the older stock — for he understands.

But there is also a negative side to this question, and one that is too often quite lost sight of. No one, while censuring the American journalist for what he publishes, ever gives him credit for the facts which out of real reticence and good feeling he refrains from publishing. Yet everybody knows that some of the most curious occurrences of life never get into print at all. They are more or less widely circulated in the private conversation of men who go about in the great world, but they are not given to the public at large — and for reasons. Take literary history, for example. There is the true story of Thackeray's death. There is the explana-

tion of why Mr. Cross attempted suicide soon after his marriage with George Eliot. There is the actual cause of Carlyle's domestic unhappiness. These things and a hundred like them are perfectly well known to very many men and women, but they are never printed, and they never will be printed, — at least in the time of any person now alive.

And the same thing is true in politics and public life. Every active journalist knows of scores of things relating to our public men — things that are absolutely true, and that if published would not only be sensational beyond anything that actually appears, but would often affect the fortunes of political parties and win or lose elections. Yet no newspaper, not even the most unscrupulous, ever opens its columns to these facts; for again, there are reasons, and these reasons appeal to the honour and the conscience of the professional journalist. There was, for instance, a President, now dead, who was elected some years ago after a most exciting and bitter fight. It was known, during this campaign, to every party editor in the country, that his private life had been one of sensuality, that it was rich in possibilities of

scandal. And the exploitation of this theme was the more tempting because with the public at large his reputation for morality and religious earnestness stood very high. But with all this material for his political annihilation ready to hand, not even the bitterest partisan among his opponents ever used it. He was unsparingly and bitterly attacked, his character for integrity was questioned; but not a word that could crush his family and blast his domestic life was printed. A few years ago a National Convention met to nominate candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency. A leading competitor for the latter office seemed certain to be chosen; but a very unsavoury scandal, whose truth could not be questioned, became known to all the delegates and to all the representatives of the press who were present at the Convention. His name was at once passed by and he lost the prize for which he had contended; but the true reason of his withdrawal was never published. Every winter at Washington the correspondents there become familiar with ugly facts in the lives of those legislators whose worship of Themis is not so absorbing as to leave them no time for the

cult of Bacchus and of Aphrodite; yet a profound reticence prevents these facts from getting into print. It seems to be a guiding principle of our journalists that whatever concerns a man's public career, and even those charges that affect his honesty and integrity, may be exploited with the greatest virulence, but that whatever touches his family life and could wound the hearts of women and children is not a legitimate subject for publicity and for attack. And this one reservation may well atone for much that is apparently wanton in the licence taken by our journalists, for it is a proof of the good feeling and real kindliness that are essentially American and for which one would seek in vain abroad, where a scandal based on sexuality is to the press the very choicest of all morsels.

But it is not only in this one sphere that American journalists exercise a discretion for which they seldom receive credit. Public men have reason to know very well how absolutely to be relied on is the professional sense of honour among representatives of the press. It is a mistake to suppose that statesmen and men of affairs are sphinxes, surrounding themselves with a portentous air of

mystery and veiling their designs and their motives in a studied obscurity. As a matter of fact, they are among the frankest of mortals, and find it an immense relief to speak without reserve. Only, their unerring judgment of men, that knowledge of human nature which is the very first requirement for a successful public man, teaches them to whom they may, and to whom they may not, safely talk. A year or more ago, I was present at a luncheon at which the principal guest was at that moment very much in the public eye. A recent act of his had excited the intensest interest all over the country, and the newspapers teemed with every possible conjecture as to its inner history. It was a puzzle; a mystery. Well, at this luncheon, over the coffee and cigars, some one present broached the subject, and the guest at once gave a minutely detailed account of the whole affair. It was a dramatic incident, and he told it so as to bring out its dramatic possibilities in the most vivid way. Now of the eight persons present, five were in some way or other connected with journalism, and he had never met any of these five before. His story was "copy" of the most precious kind.

If made public, it would have been telegraphed at once to every leading newspaper in the land, and would have been a "beat" of the most colossal proportions. Yet the narrator did not even preface his story by asking his listeners to regard it as confidential. He did not need to, and he knew it. He knew instinctively that he was among gentlemen, and that gentlemen, whether in or out of journalism, do not divulge what they learn in the intercourse of private life. The whole thing struck me as rather fine; and it was absolutely typical of the attitude of the most sagacious public men toward those journalists whose salaries, as President Harrison once said, "are not supposed to buy their honour and their consciences."

From the President down, therefore, statesmen talk most unreservedly with the representatives of the great newspapers. By explaining to them the real drift of important measures, by giving them the inner history of certain diplomatic moves, they often prevent that sort of criticism which, through misinformation, is frequently injurious to public policy and may in the conduct of foreign affairs be even prejudicial to the

national interests. And if any professional journalist has ever violated such a confidence as this, if he has ever shown himself unworthy of the trust that one reposes in a man of honour, or if he has ever let the instincts of a news-gatherer master his good faith as a man and his patriotism as an American, then the present writer, at least, has never heard of it.

To the typical American journal, then, one must frankly concede some very great and very conspicuous merits — so great and so conspicuous, indeed, that the press of no other country in the world can match them. The first is the extraordinary range, the completeness, and on the whole, the accuracy of its news, to get which it spares no labour or expense. Where a French journal will spend a few francs or an English journal a few pounds, an American newspaper will spend thousands of dollars. But this is the least of it. The American journal will give its readers information which neither the French nor the English journal will give at all, not even in the most meagre way. It is no exaggeration to say that a great American newspaper will publish a better account

of any really important occurrence in France than can be found in even the *Temps* or the *Figaro;* and that it will give quite as satisfactory a narrative of any remarkable English event as can be read in the London *Times* or the *Standard.* And it will give these descriptions on the same day, using the ocean cables with no regard whatever to the enormous cost involved. Thus the *Tribune* of New York had as complete and striking an account of the Czar's visit to France in 1897 as any of the Parisian journals published. The *Sun's* description of the Jubilee pageant in London was better told, more vivid, and written with more literary skill than that which the London *Times* of the same date contained. Nor is it merely as to these spectacular occurrences that this is true. I was in France at the time when the outbreak of the Afridis against the British garrisons on the Afghan frontier took place. The French journals, as might have been expected, chronicled the affair in despatches of only six to a dozen lines. So I turned to the English papers with much confidence, for the revolt was one of very serious importance to Englishmen, as possibly foreboding a second great mutiny against

their rule. And the London *Times* did have a multiplicity of telegrams from India relating the progress of events. But these telegrams were printed one after the other just as they had come in, not correlated or explained, but strung along in such a way that unless the reader had a minute knowledge of the geography of Northern India and of the existing disposition of the British forces there, the whole series of despatches was utterly baffling, fragmentary, and unintelligible. It was not until ten days later, when a copy of the New York *Evening Post* reached my hands, that the whole matter became clear. Then I found a concise, lucid, and connected account, which anyone could understand in a moment's reading. And here we see another point of superiority in the American over the foreign journal — the remarkable intelligence of its best editing, and a thorough comprehension of its readers' needs.

And especially must one note with satisfaction the almost universal honesty of the American newspaper. In this respect it stands as high as its English contemporaries, and with them forms a wholesome and refreshing contrast to the almost universally

corrupt and purchasable press of the Continent. Whether German or French or Italian, these are tainted from head to foot with sordid dishonesty. A high authority in Berlin lately stated with the utmost deliberation and as a matter of personal knowledge that of all the papers of the German capital he could name but one that was not bribable, and that most of them were greedily waiting to have their influence and their opinions bought. The traditions of Bismarck's "reptile press" survive, and the great Chancellor's contempt for the German journalist is a matter of history. In France, the degradation of the press is, if anything, still more appalling. The Panama investigation and the revelations that attended the settlement of poor little Max Labaudy's estate showed beyond question what every experienced person already knew — that the Parisian journals are almost all great engines of blackmail, and that their parasites suck the blood of everyone, from the minister of state and the receptive deputy down to the ambitious actress and the frowsy *cocotte*. But of the American newspaper nothing of the sort can truthfully be said. Its editor

may be swayed by prejudice or biased by his personal likes or dislikes, but no sane man would ever dream of buying or bribing either his silence or his advocacy. The thing is simply not conceivable, and this fact is an honour to the whole profession.

If, then, the American newspaper as it exists to-day in its most highly developed form is honest, if it is conducted with intelligence and liberality, if it gives the news with substantial accuracy, if it is clean, and fairly free from malicious enmities, is there any reason for supposing that a different type of journal is desired? Could such a journal find readers? Would it pay?

To these three questions it must be very frankly said that an impartial and intelligent observer would be forced to answer yes. There is good reason for supposing that a different type of journal is desired, that it would find very many readers, and that it would pay. And this is so, because our papers have other defects than those that are most generally noted, and because there exists a large constituency which is becoming more and more intensely conscious of them.

Perhaps the most obvious of these defects

is the defect of localism. Seven-tenths of all the matter published in even our greatest journals is of interest only to those readers who live within a hundred miles of the place of publication. Few Chicagoans will spend much time over a New York newspaper; scarcely any New Yorker would think of purchasing a Chicago journal. And so, while one can cite a score of admirable papers, they are, after all, preëminently local and in no sense national in their tone and in the bulk of the intelligence they give. A truly representative journal must be one whose outlook is so broad, whose range is so comprehensive, whose choice of topics is so discriminating, and whose point of view is so fitly chosen, as to make it equally welcome in Boston and in San Francisco, in New Orleans and in Minneapolis; for such a journal will bring out into bold relief only those greater interests and larger questions that appeal with equal force to every intelligent American.

But this defect is, in reality, only one manifestation of another and a broader one — of a lack of that sense of proportion which is so great and so rare a gift in every sphere of human effort. Our newspapers in the

main have no sense of true proportion at all. They seem not to know the difference between what is of purely ephemeral and limited interest, and the really great events of life. To give more space to the details of a bar-room brawl than to the progress of a great diplomatic negotiation; to fill the most conspicuous columns with the doings of some local politician and then shove off into an obscure corner a bit of foreign news that in a few months will be a permanent part of history; to write up a French cooks' ball and omit all mention of an important scientific discovery — what sort of a mind must an editor have who is responsible for so grotesque a judgment, and what sort of an opinion must he hold of those who buy and read his paper?

And this is quite akin to a very general lack of seriousness and dignity in the treatment of even the most weighty questions that arise. In the midst of a great political struggle, when the nation must decide between two opposing principles, and when the most vital interests are at stake, if the uncertain voter turns to the pages of the American press for argument and reason, for advice and exhor-

tation, does he find it? Comparatively seldom. But he *will* find a string of paragraphs discussing the size of the neck of one of the candidates, together with much serio-comic speculation as to whether this statesman puts his collar on in the usual way or whether he first buttons it and then slips it over his head! Or he will find a long dissertation on the whiskers of another statesman, or on the corpulence of still another, accompanied by mock citations from medical works as to the relation of obesity to intelligence. All this is often intensely funny. The most serious-minded reader will be obliged to laugh at very much of it. But how can he feel any real respect for the opinions or the arguments of editorial writers who will descend to such absurd tomfoolery in the face of issues that affect the whole future of the nation? How much sanity and sobriety will he be able to detect in political advice that is sandwiched in between these jokes about collar-buttons and fat and whiskers? The truth is that a good deal of the editing done in American newspaper-offices would seem to be the work partly of young children and partly of half-grown boys, so immature

and unenlightened and irresponsible is it. The slangy headlines are surely just about on the level of a hobbledehoy's idea of what is bright and sparkling. One opens a great metropolitan daily, and the first thing that meets his eye is the announcement in big black capitals, "He Biffed the Cop!" or "A Thousand Dollar Jag!" And it may be that very bad manners are coupled with very bad taste. When the Marquis of Lorne was Governor-General of Canada, he and the Princess Louise visited Chicago. This visit was recorded by one of the leading dailies of that city under the assonant heading, "Vic's Chicks!" Now, in view of the rank of the distinguished couple, and of the fact that they were strangers, and that one of them was a lady, the offensiveness of this sort of thing was only partly atoned for by the fact that it was, after a fashion, amusing.

The raw boy's point of view is also seen in the way in which legal reports are given to the public. The courts are continually engaged in the hearing and decision of cases that involve questions of very great interest even to laymen, but these are seldom brought out in the reporter's narrative; and, in fact, unless

there is something especially dramatic in the court-room proceedings, the case is very likely not to be reported at all. Several years ago, an Italian woman was tried in New York for murder, and I remember that one of the evening papers recorded the first day's proceedings under the headline, "He Wanted to Drink Her Blood!" Anybody would have supposed that the discovery of a vampire or of a were-wolf had just been made; but a reading of the columns showed that the lawyer for the defence had in an oratorical way described the prosecuting attorney as thirsting for the defendant's blood. Now the trial really involved some nice questions as to evidence; but the only thing that attracted the reporter's attention was this cheap bit of police-court rhetoric.

The most fundamental defect, however, in our American journals, is an absolute and lamentable lack of fairness in everything that touches upon political opinion. Such temperate, courteous, and rational writing as that for which the London *Spectator*, under the late Mr. R. H. Hutton's editorship, became justly famous, does not exist throughout the whole length and breadth of the United

States. And it is not merely in the editorial pages that injustice and misrepresentation abound; even the political news-reports are tinctured with a partisanship that destroys their value as news, and that does more than any other thing to discredit the claim of our journalists to be taken seriously. Who ever heard in a Republican paper of a successful Democratic mass-meeting? Are these not always regularly attended by persons who are evidently depressed and dejected, and who leave their seats in the middle of the speeches? Who ever read in a Democratic paper a complete and accurate report of a Republican orator's address? Who ever saw "applause" bracketed in any such report? Even after an election is over and the votes are all in, and when there is no earthly sense in concealing the result (which must soon in any case be known to everyone), many a newspaper will publish garbled versions of the returns and indulge itself in a few more hopeful editorials before giving in. In 1884 the New York *Sun*, which had bitterly opposed Mr. Cleveland's candidacy, published on the day after the election figures that seemed to indicate his triumph, and that were, in reality,

correct. Now this was fair and right, and good policy, too. But the credit which the *Sun* got for it was something astonishing. The compliments showered upon this journal showed how rare and wonderful a thing this was in American political journalism. Yet, as a matter of fact, to compliment a paper upon printing the news with exactness and impartiality ought to be almost as offensive as to compliment a man upon his honesty or a woman upon her chastity.

The most painful form which this unfairness takes is seen in the harsh and often outrageous criticism which it showers upon our public men. The most conspicuous instances of this can be found in looking back upon the newspaper assaults that have been made upon our Presidents. Thus, turning over the files of the American press, we read of Washington as an embezzler; of Jefferson as an atheist, an anarchist, and a libertine; of Adams as a tyrant, and of Jackson as a bully, a border ruffian, and an assassin. Van Buren was accused of stealing gold spoons from the White House; Buchanan was styled a traitor. The stock epithet applied to President Lincoln was "the Illinois baboon." President John-

son was habitually described as "a drunken boor." What was said by the newspapers of our later Presidents, from General Grant to Mr. Cleveland, is fresh in the memory of every person of mature age.

How utterly insincere and meaningless is all this hideous abuse may be seen in the fact that it is hushed into silence just as soon as the object of it passes out of the political arena into private life. No breath of it ever lingers in the allusions that are thereafter made to him by even the bitterest of his late opponents. And this sudden silence is at once the condemnation of his slanderers and a striking tribute to his own character. In sober truth, no President has ever deserved any of the personal abuse from which he has suffered so outrageously. There have been Presidents like Taylor and the elder Harrison, who were men of mediocre capacity; there have been Presidents like Jackson, who showed an autocratic spirit and an imperfect comprehension of the proper function of the executive; there have been Presidents like Polk and Buchanan, who made grievous errors of judgment; there have been Presidents like Grant, whose mistaken confidence in

others brought grievous reproach upon themselves and upon their administrations; but there never yet has been a President of the United States who did not earnestly and honestly endeavour to discharge the duties of his great office with sobriety and dignity and patriotism, and for the highest good of the entire nation. And whatever mistakes may have been made, whatever errors of judgment may have been committed, there never yet has been a President in whom the keen sight of his countrymen can to-day detect the slightest taint upon his patriotism or his personal honour. And this is a wonderful and inspiring thing — a thing for which every patriotic American should thank God daily; for it is the vindication of democracy, and so long as it is true it must remain among the imperishable glories of the American Republic.

But the journalist of to-day is just as ready to burst out into reckless vituperation as he was in those days when he accused Washington of plotting the overthrow of his country's liberties. There is, for instance, a certain journal that stands deservedly high as being one whose ability, integrity, and

devotion to what is right are very marked. It has made itself rather famous also by freely censuring its fellows for some of the things that I have just been noting. Because of their shortcomings it even goes so far as to despise the newspaper profession in general and to speak of it in contemptuous quotation marks as "journalism." Now this sheet had for many years followed the fortunes of one leading politician. It had, from his first appearance in the national arena, held him up day after day as an example of all that is best and purest in our public life. It had defended him even against a personal scandal; and it had taught its readers to regard him as the one great figure of our recent history. It finally saw him elected to the presidency and then re-elected. Well, one day this statesman sent a message to Congress on a question of foreign policy that ran counter to some of the most cherished views of the journal's editor. And what course did the editor pursue? Did he point out in temperate and earnest words the errors of his protégé? Did he argue the question at issue? Did he use reason and exhortation and persuasion? Not at all. He wrote a paragraph which, in al-

most so many words, accused the President of having penned the message in the maudlin after-moments of a drunken debauch. What can we say of such a thing as this? Only that it is a shameful thing, and one to inspire right-minded men and women with a horror of the traditions that justify political attack like this. No wonder that foreigners think ill of us as a people; for if our supreme rulers whom we deliberately select to represent us before the world are to be described day after day as drunkards, liars, hypocrites, and vulgarians, how can the nation over whom they rule be thought of as other than a nation of unmitigated blackguards?

When one says all these things in private conversation to a journalist he will in general freely grant that they embody sound and reasonable criticism. He will admit the lack of judgment, of sobriety, of dignity, and of fairness in our daily press; but he will always add: "You know the press is what the public make it. We cannot give the people any better newspapers than they ask for and are glad to buy."

And this is true enough so far as it goes; but it is not the whole truth. It is a fact that

the great mass of Americans do ask for exactly such a paper as they get. It is true that the public which is satisfied with just this sort of thing exists. But what is very strange is that no able and clear-sighted journalist has ever recognised the fact that there is still another public — a public growing larger every year — that is most grievously dissatisfied with even the best of our existing journals. Our country has to-day what it had not fifty years ago, a very large and very influential class of trained and thoroughly intelligent men, who are not to be influenced by cheap jokes and tawdry rhetoric and big scareheads. And it is these men for whom some day or other there will be established a journal that shall be national, not local; a journal that shall stand side by side with the existing ones, performing faithfully the task which they have failed to undertake. It will be a journal whose pages shall be neither dull on the one hand nor vulgar on the other. It will be courteous to its opponents, setting forth their arguments strongly and fairly, and answering them rationally, crisply, and convincingly. If it makes mistakes, it will correct them gladly, and thus win the confidence of even the men

who reject its views. It will have a light touch for lighter themes, but with the fire of earnest conviction glowing through it all; with an American sense of humour and an equally American sense of decency, and propriety, and fair play; and it will in the end possess an influence that shall surpass the influence of Presidents and cabinets, in that it will appeal to right reason and truth and elemental justice. And the exceptional man whose fortune it shall be to edit and direct it, will become in the nation a force for good such as it is seldom granted anyone to wield; for he will have given to all men of patriotic sincerity a standard to which they can resort with confidence, and thus, to use the fine old Roman phrase, he will have deserved well of the Republic.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN IN LIVERPOOL

Uncle Tom's Cabin in Liverpool

THERE is one European city which nearly every travelling American at some time or other visits, but which he never really knows. This is Liverpool, the front door of Europe, and to the vast majority of tourists the front door only. When the huge steamer heaves its great side against the slanting gangways of the Landing Stage, and the voyager sets his feet firmly upon them with the keen joy of being once more on land, his thought is not of Liverpool, but leaps at once to bournes beyond this dull grey sky and this maze of dingy streets. And so, after he has had his amicable two-minute interview with the British customs inspector, who obligingly sticks little labels on the luggage and blandly ignores the half-concealed cigars that must last for many a long day in the land of poor tobacco, the American jumps into a contiguous four-wheeler and rattles on his

way, with high thoughts and a happy heart. He may sometimes, to be sure, partake of a hasty meal at the Adelphi Hotel, where he will be served by the most insolent German waiters that can be found in Europe; but this will be the extent of his experience with Liverpool. In an hour or two he will be crossing over the ferry to Birkenhead to visit Chester, with its double-decked streets and lustrous ivies, and beautiful stretches of greenery; or he will be reclining luxuriously in a well-padded railway carriage, speeding along between hedgerows and scarlet-sprinkled meadows, with the fascinating zest of one whose vacation is still before him, whose letter of credit is still untouched, and who is eagerly anticipating all the undefined, mysterious delights of mighty London.

But to him Liverpool itself is nothing. It is not particularly old. It is not "historical." Baedeker tells of nothing there which seems especially attractive. It is just a big, commonplace, uninteresting British town, with commerce, shipping, railway facilities, and a large but not distinguished population. Why should a tourist who has yet to visit historic England and all the Continent waste

any time in Liverpool? And in fact he does n't.

Yet there is quite another side to this. There are some travellers who, while fully capable of drawing inspiration from historic scenes, and of appreciating all the glories of tower and castle and cathedral, are still beset by a desire to study human beings also, and who find these no less interesting than the storied relics of the past. They like to prowl about in unfamiliar corners, to chat with the casual native, to sit in the public parks and watch the unconscious throng, to see the popular amusements, and, in other words, to understand the daily life and thought and habits of the men and women who make up the mass of every nation. And after they have gone about for awhile, they manage to divest themselves of that beautifully American conception of what foreign travel really means, which has been cleverly epitomised as "rushing madly from one strange bed to another with a perpetual cinder in one's eye." They think it better in the end to see a little and to see it thoroughly, and thus to bring home some definite food for thought, rather than to bewilder their brains and memories with a

[illegible]

And so if you wish to know the modern every-day Briton entirely *per se*, and to understand him as he actually is, you must be sure to catch him in some such place as Liverpool, where his environment is one that is in harmony with his actual temperament, and is not romantic, nor yet steeped in memories of the past; but where you will perceive with a clear, achromatic vision the creature as he really is — a stodgy, pursy, pig-headed, obstinate, immovable, masterful, tenacious creature — a creature to make you despair of him for his crass philistinism, and admire him beyond the power of expression for his inherent force and illimitable efficiency.

Therefore, if perchance a tourist whose experience is one of several seasons, and who finds pleasure in pursuing the *Culturgeschichte*, ever comes to read these pages, let him make a note of this advice. When next he lands in Liverpool, he is not to hurry on to other and more superficially attractive places; but he is to call his cab and leisurely betake himself to Mr. Russell's excellent hotel in Church Street, — which is one of the best-kept inns the present writer has ever found in any country, — and let him there commit his luggage

to the porter and his appetite to the personage who rules the cosy little breakfast-room. And after he has eaten of the light and spongy muffins, and done justice to the succulent chops that show the loving touch of the hissing grill, and after he has disposed of other plain but satisfying British viands, and has soothed his spirit with one of his remaining American cigars, then let him stroll out into the highways, past the velvet greensward of the pro-cathedral gardens and the queer little brown pro-cathedral itself, trying hard to assert its temporary dignity, and let him keep his eyes wide open for the incidents and oddities of Liverpudlian life.

He will see uncounted thousands of the Britons who are quite unknown to fame, who have no share in parliaments or pageants, who are not even members of the county yeomanry, who do not legislate or serve as soldiers, but who just make their daily bread in shops and warehouses, and who have good digestions and a happy absence of imagination. He will read their business signs couched in the neo-British dialect of to-day inviting him to enter and purchase, or to pay an especial visit to the house of "Liverpool's Leading

Booters" — a word which we cheerfully present to Professor Brander Matthews for his next supplementary list of Briticisms. He will ramble through Williamson Square, the Bowery of Liverpool, where they do such things and they say such things every evening in the week, and where he may attend a "smoking concert," at which he will be asked to sing a ditty when his turn comes around. He will be pleased to observe near the Prince's Park two small dissenting chapels that are evidently rivals in the work of saving souls; for each has a large tin sign inviting spiritual custom. Both salute the wayfarer with "Welcome All!" but one describes its exercises alliteratively as "Brief, Bright, and Brotherly," while the other, with perhaps a profounder psychological insight into human nature, says nothing about the brightness or the brotherliness, but gets down to a definite basis on the question of brevity in announcing (as though it were a surgical operation) that "All Is Over in One Hour," adding still more reassuringly, "Sermon Positively Only Fifteen Minutes."

Then there is that picturesquely named locality, the Back Goree, which I once inno-

cently supposed to be the lair of pirates, and crossed by noisome lanes, and filled with the haunts of the evil, but in which an actual inspection disclosed nothing more terrifying than a few mouldy naval stores, and no one more formidable than a beery mariner, who stood in the door of an eating-house chewing a long, yellow straw. This eating-house has a red and white sign, which displays the names of the viands obtainable there, among them "Hot Pot," "Raspberry Sandwiches," "Eccles Cakes," and other (to me) unknown British delicacies. I have often wished that I could eat some Hot Pot and an Eccles Cake, but somehow my gastronomic courage has always failed me, blighted perhaps by the warm breath of cabbage-soup, whose odour gushes violently and perpetually through the open doorway. He who is equally timorous and unenterprising can find a safer place for the satisfaction of his appetite at the Bear's Paw, a vast and flourishing restaurant, whose *menu* is printed on a piece of brown paper about as large as a horse-blanket, and is as full of capital letters and exclamation-points as an American newspaper at election time. One does not readily grasp the full meaning of

such capitalised warnings as "No Follows of Asparagus!" but any one with a sense of style can appreciate the Tacitean brevity of the elliptical note, "Hot Mashed Goes with the Joint." And — well, there is a good deal of ethnic instruction to be gleaned quietly in the streets of Liverpool, and what has been set forth above is given only by way of illustration.

Some years ago I happened to be spending a little time there, having arrived a few days in advance of the sailing of my steamer. It was not the first visit, nor the second, nor the third; and so the hours passed rather slowly, and when the evening came I turned to the theatres in quest of amusement and diversion. Oddly enough, at both the leading houses the stage was held by plays relating to American manners. At the first a drama whose name I cannot now recall was billed as "A Thrilling Picture of Far Western Life!" From the advertisement it appeared that the scene was laid, with a slight geographical misfit, in Denver, Nebraska, and by an excess of generosity on the part of the playwright two villains were provided — one being Colonel Esek Slodge and the other plain Joe

Williams. A foot-note added the enticing promise, "In the Fifth Act, Joe Williams is Hanged in Full Sight of the Audience!" I rather wished to see that play, but somehow or other the hanging of Joe Williams appeared to lack some of the essential elements of cheerfulness, and so I turned to the other theatre as a *pis aller*.

Its bill-boards vividly announced the "Protracted and Expensive Engagement of the Celebrated American Actor, Mr. Blank Blank," with a company described as "A Galaxy of the Best Histrionic Talent in the States." Furthermore, one was informed (in smaller letters) that "all parts being filled by Americans, this presentation affords a vivid, realistic picture of contemporary American life, as delineated in that most famous of all American plays, entitled UNCLE TOM'S CABIN." After reading this, and especially the allusion to "contemporary American life," there was really nothing to do but to get a ticket and go; and the expenditure of five shillings having secured one of the best seats in the house, the present writer saw the curtain rise promptly at eight o'clock, disclosing the family mansion of Mr. Shelby in

Kentucky, with the negro quarters adjacent to it.

The scene was one of surpassing beauty and, above all, of realism. The Shelby mansion was of white marble with Italian pillars, and it was embowered in palm-trees and other tropical foliage, while far away in the background stretched the blue waters of an inland sea not usually recorded on the maps, upon which were to be descried a few stray gondolas; for every one is well aware that the gondola is a favourite means of locomotion with the natives of Kentucky. The scene was so very beautiful, in fact, that one at first forgot to be surprised at the close proximity of the negro quarters to the white marble mansion; for the distance between the two was, on a liberal estimate, six paces, so that the Shelby family were probably at times quite well informed of the progress of the cookery of their domestics. But it was soon obvious just why the quarters were so near the mansion. It was to enable the Shelbys to glut themselves with negro minstrelsy at any hour of the day and night; for presently the "hands" emerged and sang a hymn, a proceeding which they repeated at regular

intervals, like a cuckoo-clock, all through the act. And when they did so, the Shelbys always suspended any other occupation and struck attitudes all over the place and listened. Mr. Shelby was a fine figure of a man. He wore jack-boots and white duck trousers, while Mrs. Shelby at 3 P. M. appeared in a low-necked dress and a tiara of precious stones. When it subsequently transpired that the Shelbys were deeply in debt, and that the white marble mansion was mortgaged up to its fastigium, I could n't help thinking that Mrs. Shelby might have raised a little money on her tiara instead of weakly consenting to the sale of George Harris and Eliza, and of poor Uncle Tom, all of whom presently appeared while the hands were singing their seventh hymn. George Harris was undoubtedly a typical mulatto slave, because the play-bill said so; but if I had seen him anywhere else I should have taken him for Albert Chevalier doing a coster turn. Uncle Tom was nice and black. When he was summoned to appear, in order that he might be informed that he had been sold to the heartless Haley, he came directly from working in the fields, and he had white cotton

gloves on, such as were doubtless always worn at the South by the better class of slaves when hoeing corn and digging sweet potatoes. He had a fine deep voice and a rich Whitechapel accent; and when he was informed that he had been sold to Haley, he observed with some emotion that it was very 'ard. But there was no help for it; so he had to go, but not before he, too, had sung a hymn, and had listened to the rendering of still another by his fellow-slaves.

George and Eliza, however, had more spirit than Uncle Tom; for they resolved to run away; and they did so while Haley was obligingly looking at the inland sea and the gondolas, and perhaps composing poetry; for he failed to hear a word of their intention, though it was discussed by them in a loud and carrying tone of voice. When he did discover it, they had already gone, and then he promptly called for bloodhounds and set off in hot pursuit, waiting, however, to hear the field hands give a rendering of one final hymn, and also the encores for which the audience very kindly called, wishing perhaps to give Eliza and her child a better start.

The beginning of the second act revealed a

tavern on the banks of the Ohio River, to which place Eliza had succeeded in escaping. The tavern was simply but sufficiently furnished with one deal table and two chairs, and it had a large window which commanded a sweeping view of the river. And here one discovered a remarkable fact as to the variations of climate that can be found in Kentucky; for whereas the Shelby estate, when Eliza left it, was enjoying a tropical summer, the broad Ohio, on the borders of the same State, was full of icebergs. Of course it is possible to suppose that she had consumed six months or so in reaching the river, and had thus given the season time to change; but the speed with which she rushed in seemed to render this hypothesis untenable. Haley and the bloodhounds were on her track; and already a large poster on the wall of the tavern proclaimed "One Hundred Pounds Reward for a Runaway Slave," from which it appeared that Kentuckians prefer the English monetary system. As soon as Eliza saw the poster she felt faint and sat down on one of the chairs; and when Phineas Fletcher presently came in, she confided in him at once, because he was a Quaker and said

"thee" and "thou," and because, as she told him, he had so good and kind a face. I should myself have taken him for Jesse James; but Eliza knew her man, and when the bloodhounds were presently heard baying, he shut her up in a large closet for safety. Haley soon appeared with his myrmidons and two bloodhounds. The bloodhounds were very large and fat, and they inspired real terror — not in Phineas Fletcher, but in Haley and his minions, who were obviously afraid lest the animals should lean up against the scenery and go to sleep; so that it became necessary from time to time to tread furtively on their tails to keep them awake and baying. Haley had some talk with Phineas, and presently wanted to look in the closet; but when he grew insistent, Phineas, like a true Quaker, pulled a pistol out of each boot and stopped him. Later the myrmidons attempted the same thing, and then Phineas pulled two more pistols from somewhere down the back of his neck and stopped *them*. Then Haley went out to get more myrmidons, and Phineas had to give up; so he rushed Eliza out of the house, and she ran across the river on the ice just as in the book,

her passage being visible from the window. The audience naturally felt a good deal of sympathy with Eliza; but for my part I was more concerned for Haley and the myrmidons, since in spite of the rigour of the climate which filled the river with icebergs, they were all clad in linen dusters and overalls, and I am sure their legs must have been very cold.

Later still, Eliza and George were united; and being driven to bay, they made a gallant stand for freedom in the mountains, aided by Phineas. The lofty peak on which they rallied was not less than seven feet high, and when Haley and Tom Loker and the myrmidons and Lawyer Marks attacked them, Phineas shed a perfect shower of pistols from every conceivable part of his person. Haley's gang also had at least two pistols apiece, and both parties fired steadily at one another for several minutes, at a distance of six paces, with no harm to anyone, which served rather to discredit Kentuckian marksmanship. Somehow or other, in the end, after everybody had used up all his cartridges, George and Eliza escaped down the rear of the peak, and then Lawyer Marks led in a large mouse-coloured

ass, on which he expected to ride away. The ass kicked various members of the party and excited uncontrollable mirth in the audience. It seemed rather awkward in its movements, however, and presently the skin over one of its fetlocks burst open and made evident the fact that the ass was surreptitiously wearing corduroy trousers and patent-leather shoes.

Still further along in the play we were introduced to the luxurious abode of St. Clare in the city of New Orleans, and to the details of his domestic *ménage*. A good deal of the action took place in the garden, a noble plaisaunce enclosed in a dense thicket of fir-trees, and with contiguous mountains topped with snow. Miss Ophelia was a very prominent figure in these scenes. She was a very ample lady, with a bunch of keys at her waist, and a rubicund countenance, and her language was intimately suggestive of New England; for she said "How shiftless!" at least once in every two minutes; though sometimes, when she varied the form and said, "Now, that 's really very shiftless, you know!" or "Drat it, you 're really quite too shiftless!" one could n't help suspecting her of being

secretly an Anglomaniac. She was greatly concerned with the general disorder of what she called the 'ouse, and went about picking up everything that anybody dropped, except their *h*'s. St. Clare was also an interesting character, though it was darkly hinted that he was given to dissipation; and, in fact, he showed this symbolically by parting his hair in the middle and always appearing with a cigarette, which he was continually allowing to go out and then relighting. Once, however, after he had been no doubt particularly wild, he came in slapping his brow and exclaiming, "Oh, my head!" and then Uncle Tom dealt with him effectually.

"Mahster," said Uncle Tom — who, by the way, always wore his hat in the drawing-room — "do you know where such courses hend?"

"No," said St. Clare, rather feebly.

"Then let me tell you, Mahster," said Uncle Tom with his deepest voice. "They hend in 'ELL!"

After this, St. Clare smoked no more cigarettes and always parted his hair on one side. But he must have had a moral relapse, for when he was brought in one evening, stabbed,

it was stated openly that the affair had taken place in "a drinking-bar."

The later scenes were very harrowing. At the command of the brutal Legree, Uncle Tom was whipped several times in each scene, and Sambo and Quimbo, who did it, always added a fresh horror to the spectacle by dancing a breakdown before beginning, and by singing at least two songs after they had finished. When Tom finally succumbed and Legree was arrested for the murder of St. Clare, all the Shelby family and the Shelby field hands, and Topsy, and Haley, and Lawyer Marks appeared in some unaccountable way and sang "The Sweet Bye and Bye."

The last scene showed George and Eliza safe on Canadian soil. George was full of emotion. He announced that at last he had reached a land over which the flag of Hengland floated, where 'ealth and 'ope were possible to hevery one, and where, has hall men knew, Britons never, never could be slaves. As he said this he took out of one of his coat-tails a large cotton pocket-handkerchief which displayed the British emblem, and spread it under his chin like a porous-plaster. This was the cue for the orchestra, which struck up

"God Save the Queen;" whereupon every one in the audience arose, and the play ended amid great enthusiasm.

A large and portly Briton who breathed very hard had sat beside me, and throughout the performance had incidentally occupied half of my chair as well as all his own. As we were about to leave, he caught my eye, and at once remarked with an air of intense conviction:

"Rum lot, these Yankees, ain't they?"

And remembering my countrymen as they had just been dramatically depicted, I said that I thought they were.